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Illustrated on front cover
J Ensor
Detail from The Entry of Christ into Brussels 1888

COURTAULD INSTITUTE OF ART

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Ensor to Permeke

J Ensor

97
The Entry of Christ into Brussels 1888

"Finally, hounded by followers, I took myself with the greatest joy into that solitary realm where the mask dominates everything with its brutality, light and splendour. The mask seems to call out to me: 'Vivid colours, wild expression, sumptuous scenery, grand, unexpected gestures, chaotic movement, sublime unrest' "
(The writings of James Ensor)

London:

Royal Academy of Arts

Ensor to Permeke

Nine Flemish Painters 1880-1950

Brusselmans
De Smet
Ensor
Evenepoel
Permeke
Spilliaert
Tytgat
Van den Berghe
Wouters

The Royal Academy of Arts
Piccadilly
London W1V ODS

1971

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All the notes for the biographies and bibliographies, as well as those notes which accompany the illustrations, were written by L. M. A. Schoonbært, assistant at the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Antwerp.

General Information

This exhibition opens on Saturday 25th September and closes on Sunday 21st November 1971.

Hours of Admission
Weekdays 10 am - 6 pm
Sundays 2 pm - 6 pm

Price of Admission 50p (Students etc 25p)
25p Mondays.
Season Ticket £1.25 (Students 63p)

Illustrated Catalogue £1.25 (by post £1.50)

Reduced price admissions
Direct admission at the officially reduced price of 25p for Students, Teachers accompanying parties, Members of Staff Associations, Working Men's or Girls' Clubs, or similar organisations and Pensioners can be obtained at the entrance to the Exhibition on production of a current student or membership card, pension book or other form of identification.

Visitors are required to give up their sticks, umbrellas and cameras before entering the galleries. They can be left with the attendants at the Cloakroom in the Entrance Hall. The other attendants are strictly forbidden to take charge of anything. Invalids may use their own rubber-tyred wheeled chairs or obtain the use of one without charge by previous arrangement. Application should be made to the Registry for the necessary authority.

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1971

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From November 20th to December 12th in the Diploma Galleries.

1972

23 British Sculptors

From January 8th to March 5th in the Main Galleries.

Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Art

From February 19th to April 23rd in the Diploma Galleries.

204th Annual Summer Exhibition

From April 30th to July 23rd in the Main Galleries.

Hammer Collection

From June 24th to July 24th in the Diploma Galleries.

Neo-Classicism
(Council of Europe Exhibition)

From September 7th to November 19th in the Main and Diploma Galleries.

Foreword

by Sir Thomas Monnington, PRA

We welcome to the Royal Academy this exhibition of the Flemish aspect of Belgian art which covers a period in which European painting passed through its phases of post-impressionism, symbolism and expressionism. This era of Belgian painting is most perceptively treated by Mr Denys Sutton in his foreword to this catalogue. In particular the British public will welcome an opportunity to become more familiar with the work of the two great Flemish artists – Ensor and Permeke. Ensor in spite of his English descent disclaimed any indebtedness to Turner but it would seem that in his passage from a limited to a radiant palette he must have absorbed, if unconsciously, a good deal from our unique English painter. It was in 1946 that the Arts Council exhibition of Ensor's work was shown in the National Gallery; so a new generation will now have an opportunity of enjoying his art. Permeke, the greatest figure in Flemish expressionism, also perhaps fell momentarily under the spell of Turner's colour when he was in this country from 1914 to 1918 after he had been wounded in the first world war. But his *Harvest in Devonshire* was a flash in the pan and he reverted to his monumental monochromatic style quite divorced from anything that was happening elsewhere. This exhibition for the first time gives us the true measure of what Mr Vanbeselaere in his admirable introduction terms "his cosmic vision of nature, of the sea, the land and also of man".

In this introduction a full survey of the work of not only Ensor and Permeke but of the other seven painters included in our exhibition has been written by Mr Vanbeselaere, Chief Conservator of the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Antwerp, who also has acted as Chairman of the Executive Committee in Belgium. We are much indebted to him and his colleagues for the impressive results of their labours. The exhibition could not have been realised without the generous support of the Belgian Government and we are indebted to Mr Frans Van Mechelen, the Minister for Flemish Culture, for his sympathetic advocacy throughout our negotiations. We are also most grateful to Mr Walter Debrock, General Administrator at the Ministry of Education and Culture and Mr Paul Delmotte, Head of the Department for the Promotion of the Arts, for their help in many directions.

In this country the Belgian Ambassador, His Excellency Baron Jean van den Bosch, has taken a close personal interest in every aspect of the exhibition and given every possible assistance in its realisation. The Cultural Counsellor, Mr G. Van der Espt has acted as a liaison between our two countries and given invaluable aid in many of the practical arrangements; and the Academy's Librarian and Exhibitions Secretary, Mr Philip James, has been responsible for the co-ordination and presentation of the exhibition here at Burlington House.

Last but not least we are profoundly grateful to all the owners without whose generous co-operation the exhibition could not have been arranged.

Introduction

By W. Vanbeselaere

Exhibitions are in fashion these days. Even the experts cannot keep up with them, and it happens all too often that an out-of-the-ordinary, unique event which really could have made our lives the richer, passes unnoticed. Will the "Ensor to Permeke" exhibition, one wonders, organized with minute care and great expectations both on the British and the Belgian side, generate enough enthusiasm via press, radio and television to inspire in turn the London public?

"Flemish Art" is hardly an unknown quantity to art lovers in Britain. Geniuses such as Van Eyck, Bosch, Bruegel and Rubens are high peaks in Western painting and they are splendidly represented in the National Gallery and the Wallace Collection. But the revival of Flemish art in the 19th century, which continued into the twentieth with at least two masters of genius—Ensor and Permeke—is still not widely known or sufficiently appreciated abroad.

The Royal Academy exhibition is intended as an improved version of the important showing, under the same title, given in 1970 at the Paris Orangerie, of 70 years of Flemish painting (from 1880 to 1950). In Paris, too many artists were shown—no less than sixteen—which meant that the visitor found it impossible to obtain a meaningful picture of the unfamiliar world confronting him, and all the more so because some painters were represented by only one or two works. This made us decide to limit the choice this time to nine—a justifiable choice, though understandably criticised in Belgium because it leaves out a good number of important names. Why not, for instance, include De Braekeleer, a precursor who, I am convinced, will one day be considered as the equal of Ensor and Permeke, and in whose work all the traditional qualities of Flemish painting are to be found, such as rich harmony of colour, imbued with the magic of light and dark, astonishing technique and ruthless realism, all serving to express a generous, tragically human message, the only really important thing in art.

And of the same generation of symbolists, so splendidly represented by Ensor, why not show the solitary Jacob Smits, obsessed as he was by the idea of absolute light as a reflection of eternity, with the dark earth as its counterpart? Why not the landscape painter De Saedeleer, and Gustaaf Van de Woestijne, latecomer among the symbolists, in whose religious and rural scenes one catches an echo of the Flemish Primitives and whose unique significance is becoming more evident by the day? He might appeal to a British public even more than Spilliaert, although the latter may look more "modern" to the "young".

Why no work by Van Rysselberghe, Lemmen and Claus, all post-impressionists who clearly show a French influence? Why not the first of the Flemish expressionists, Albert Servaes, who is without doubt the only irreplaceable religious painter in modern Europe, with his gripping calvaries and his lives of Mary; a man with exceptional prophetic gifts in the religious sense, whose primeval power bears comparison only with that of Permeke? And why not Daeye, of the same

generation, who was obsessed by the idea of the completely purified form and produced no more than a hundred works? I mention these names with a heavy heart because I realize that they are just a handful taken from an overflowing abundance. But what is now being offered is already so overwhelming that I cannot help wondering if it would not have been better, after all, to limit the exhibition still further! It is well worth raising the question why names such as Ensor and Permeke and many others are barely known beyond our frontiers. The reasons for this are many and varied, but in the main they are accounted for by the wholly autonomous character of art in our small country, which has affirmed its original tradition with amazing self-assurance and in doing so has isolated itself. At the same time we failed to make our artistic achievements known abroad. But let there be no mistake about one thing. Our country cannot be said to have been ignorant of what was happening abroad, in France and Germany, at the end of the 19th and during the first half of the 20th century. Brussels was in close touch with Paris, and all avant-garde movements there were immediately taken over and assimilated by artists whose "sensitivity" made up for whatever creativeness they lacked. Flanders, however, had her own age-old tradition which, after Belgium had acquired statehood in 1830, experienced a rebirth with the Romantic movement. Confident again about their own talents, the strongest artists, such as Ensor and Permeke, found their own expression and pictorial language, thereby creating a distance between themselves and the leading centres. Like Van Gogh, Ensor evolved from the darkest to the lightest shades. His was the earthy northern spectrum of Flemish impressionism, akin to that of Holland and Germany, and in stark contrast with the pale revolutionary tones of the French impressionists which had conquered Europe and the world. But Ensor's light palette had little to do with French impressionism. In fact, it was Turner with his yellow and red ochres who had been Ensor's guiding hand in his transition from dark to light, just as the transparent symphonies, with their shrill accents of colour, of Turner's final period marked Ensor's palette at the time of his great creativity.

Ensor has angrily denied owing any tribute to either French impressionism or Turner. So deeply convinced was he that his language sprang entirely from his own experience and from nowhere else, that he considered any mention of influence as a disparagement of his own wholly original vision.

Van Gogh was a restless wanderer. Financial and mental misery drove him from Holland to Paris where his brother Theo worked for an avant-garde art gallery. He quickly made the French impressionist palette his own and then fled to Arles, where his powerful lust for life urged him to use the fiercest colours and a totally new mode of expression. While Van Gogh was incorporated into the French art world which, through its unchallenged prestige soon made his works world famous, Ensor remained in Ostend. Apart from three years at the Brussels Academy, he lived in this elegant seaside resort of European standing, from his birth until the day he died. Poverty he did not know, but his was the far more searing pain of being totally misunderstood which was to prove fatal in the end. He was a lonely man, not a wanderer. His wanderings were within himself, in the bewildering world of his imagination.

The art of Permeke should also be seen in the light of the Flemish pictorial tradition. Together with Van den Berghe and Gust De Smet, he was a pupil at the Ghent Academy where, as virtually everywhere else in Europe, the French impressionist palette was the current language. But when he settled down with his friends in the rural village of Latem on the River Leie, and met his contemporary Albert Servaes, a self-taught painter who was the first to use a specifically expressionist language—a sombre palette, brutal and muddy—he, in turn, linked up again with the tradition in which the young Ensor and his predecessors De Braekeleer, Vogels and Artan, had worked.

And during his stay in England (1914-1919) where he was sent as a wounded soldier and invalided out of the armed forces, he began to paint in a colour scheme which recalls Turner—in his *Harvest in Devonshire* (no. 173)—but in the works which followed, stolidly going his own way, he expressed himself virtually in monochrome, as Servaes had shown him. Back in Belgium he met his friends De Smet and Van den Berghe again in 1922. They, spending the war years in Holland, had come under the influence of German expressionism and chosen a road not unlike his own. This resulted in a heavily serious, orthodox expressionism wildly distorting "photographic reality" and totally different from the cubism, futurism, dadaism, constructivism and abstract art in France and Germany.

This Flemish expressionism remained rooted in the earth and in the people, in the fundamental and traditional realism of the country. Its essence was visual, sensual experience, wholly devoid of preconceived theories (another characteristic element of our tradition). As such it distinguished itself as an independent phenomenon having nothing in common with what was happening in the intellectual, urban centres of France, Germany, England and elsewhere. In a small country with limited means of cultural propaganda, it was to take a long time before this Flemish expressionism became known beyond the frontiers, although Permeke, at least among the avant-garde of his own country, was soon recognized as a giant.

Permeke's world reputation was only gradually established but it was an inevitable process. His cosmic vision of nature, of the sea, the land, and also of man is of such power and depth that his work touches on life's "ultimate" secrets. Thinking of his antipode in modern art, the astonishingly versatile and inexhaustible Picasso, one dares to wonder which of the two, Picasso or Permeke, will in the long run turn out to be the bearer of the deepest, most revealing message.

This exhibition remains limited to the work of three generations who, even seen in a wider European context, come under the headings of Symbolism, Late Impressionism or Fauvism, and Expressionism. We all know the relative value of "isms" but they remain generally accepted classifications which make it possible to group the most differing and contrasting personalities.

James Ensor (1860–1949) should be mentioned together with the other specifically northern "symbolists", Munch and Hodler. Rik Wouters (1882–1916), clearly influenced by Cézanne, can be readily counted among the Fauvists, while Henri Evenepoel (1872–1899) who had

barely asserted himself after his academy years in Brussels and Paris when he died at the age of 27, is grouped with them if only because of his generous, amiable and moving attitude towards life.

The deadly serious expressionism which, unlike the symbolist school, was not based on an individual experience of greater or lesser complexity but searched for deeper issues of general importance, found three masters in Flanders. Constant Permeke (1886–1952), the cosmic visionary, Albert Servaes (1883–1966), fanatically religious, and Frits Van den Berghe (1883–1939), torn and tormented by Freudian complexes. Gust De Smet (1877–1943) extracted from expressionism mainly the orthodox form language and built his work on these new norms. He is regarded as the classic exponent of this school because of his open generosity of mind, the balanced construction of his works, his simplicity as a man of the people, and the mellow delight of his velvety colours. He does not wrestle with heavy problems.

The style of Edgard Tytgat (1879–1957) is reminiscent of the archaic language of popular prints. It is wonderfully suited to the sauciness, naive innocence and dreamy admiration with which he discovers the realm of love.

Jan Brusselmans (1884–1953) is a man whose rough exterior hides a heart of gold, a simple carpenter who builds his works up into simple, solid structures, with rough but pure and balanced colours which almost seem to give off a smell of freshly sawn wood.

Léon Spilliaert (1881–1946) has nothing in common with expressionism but his date of birth makes him part of that generation. He is an outsider, going his own way. He illustrates moods with Jugendstil, Modern Style and fin-de-siècle refinements which, together with Van de Woestijne, make him appear as a late symbolist.

Instead of writing a lengthy introduction we will limit ourselves to a discussion of the two principal masters, Ensor and Permeke, since they dominate Flemish painting during the 1880–1950 period. As for the seven other painters, we will add some excerpts to the details about their lives and works which can be found elsewhere in this catalogue.

The port of Ostend can be fiercely gloomy in winter when the rain pelts down from a leaden sky, and the fishing smacks are heaving amid floating rubbish and pieces of wreckage. A dark disgusting pool!

This picture forms in my mind whenever I survey Ensor's "dark period", his first, when he used only the most sombre shades, fear pervading his very bones, and was inescapably drawn towards the most brutal aspects of reality. In this mood he painted his rough *Oarsman* (no. 62) and his *Scandalised Masks* (no. 60), his first painting with masks, repulsive, masterful and never to be bettered. But the same year, 1883, when he was 23, produced his delightful *Self-portrait in a Flowered Hat* (no. 61), although he only gave it its note of travesty years later by adding the hat, making the subject like a calling-bird, singing like a nightingale in the dusk, both Adonis and Narcissus, seducing and tempting with his large intelligent eyes. The darkest year speaks both of horror and liberation. The power of his imagination throws him into the deepest terror but also sets him on the path to the promised land of light.

He painted his first masterpiece when he was 19, in 1879. His *Lady with a Tilted Nose* is done in dark, remarkably cool colours, with an undercurrent of questioning restlessness. Fear was revealed to him as the mystery of life. The exceptional gift of being an artist seems to have struck him with a sudden abruptness. What event in his life caused this shock? We do not know. He was a child prodigy in all respects, mature at an exceptionally early age for a painter. Just as inexplicably, this extraordinary state of inspiration was taken away from him again, precisely in the year 1893, when he was 33. In those thirteen years he had produced an irreplaceable abundance of works, both as a painter and as a graphic artist. Works of bewildering mystery, the most mysterious produced in Europe since Bosch and Goya.

Ensor lived in Ostend in the petit-bourgeois circle of his parents, his sister, aunt and grandmother, but his tiny attic studio was the refuge where his work was born. He found his inspiration in what surrounded him. His studio, the view of roofs and polders, the pretentious drawing room, his family, a cupboard, a lamp, the fishing harbour, the sea. We find all that in his work, a reality filled with a mysterious life. But the most complex mystery of all he found in man. Of his father, an Englishman who led the aimless life of an expatriate in Ostend, he painted a remarkably charitable portrait, but those of his mother and sister have the disquieting accents of Goya.

Charitable, too, is his *Bourgeois Salon* and *Afternoon in Ostend* (no. 52), moving his *Russian Music*, intimate his *Lady in Blue* but pathetic *The Depressed Lady*, and his *Lady in Distress* (no. 56) weeps as she flings herself on the bed, destroyed.

After 1883, his colours begin to lighten but his palette remains as "dirty" as a drizzling sky until 1886 when he begins to use a scale of colours nobody could have expected, first in his *Self-Portrait with Easel* (no. 106) and his *Girls dressing* (no. 76), then, a year later, with his *Carnival on the Beach*. One suspects he must have seen work by Turner. By 1886, yellow ochres and rose-madder are his dominant colours, which would have been unthinkable without Turner. Intuitively, Ensor must have preferred them above the limpid clarity of the French impressionist colour scheme because of their mysterious, misty vagueness. One should not forget that his father was an Englishman although Ensor's kinship with Turner's enchanting dream world was more important. This becomes even more evident in 1887 and it remains a constant factor throughout his years of maximum creative tension until 1892, in such unequalled masterpieces as *The Ray* (no. 122) and *Strange Masks* (no. 119). These remind us of Turner's visions of Venice, with white as the dominant tone and vivid blue, red, green and yellow adding sharp accents.

In any event, a milder atmosphere pervades Ensor's work for some years after 1886. Light has broken through and the world of his dreams is gradually freeing him from the pool of darkness which bewildered him in 1883. But strain and restlessness are soon returning and he becomes more mordant and sarcastic than ever before. Masks and skeletons become his haunting themes. His outlines are like taut strings, like exposed nerves, and one wonders apprehensively how long this state of hypertension can last.

His small-sized *Self-Portrait with Easel* in ochre shades, dated 1886, is his most refined, most aristocratic self-portrait. As the ironic dandy, with a touch of defiance, he places himself full-length on a throne-like seat before his easel. His posture and all the attributes illustrate his certainty of being one of the chosen and worthy of tribute.

Ensor's enormous *Christ's Entry into Brussels*, of 1888 (no. 97), is his best known work and it established his legendary fame as the "painter of masks". At the time, this baffling work was neither understood nor accepted, either by his colleagues, the avant-garde painters of whose group—Les Vingt—he was himself a member, or by the avant-garde critics. In one vast effort he had meant to express all the enigmatic, inexplicable forces that relentlessly drove him on to create. It is a fantastic carnival procession, with life-sized masked figures following a brass band and Christ, riding an ass, as the central theme—"Jesus, King of Brussels". Ensor, master painter by the grace of the gods, identifies himself with Him since the Christ figure bears his features. And with equal defiance he unfurls a flaming red banner across the whole breadth of his canvas with a screaming appeal for social justice—"Vive la sociale".

This painting amounts to a challenge, both by its subject matter and its colours. The bustling crowd in the background is suggested with light touches of great bravura and here, just for once, Ensor paints with the gay limpidity of a French impressionist. But virtually the entire surface of this enormous canvas is painted with incredible boldness and certainty and in a totally unexpected colour scheme. Not a trace remains of Turner's haze-enshrouded harmonies. In the foreground, colours clarion shrill and raucous as a village band, with perplexing contrasts and discords. Since his characters wear masks he can give full rein to his colours without having to consider the faithful rendering of human features. Moreover, he is free to lend his faces heightened powers of expression, alternating between the ridiculous, the pitiable and the tragic. All this in 1888, two years before Van Gogh's death and in a colour scale close to that of the Dutch master.

In 1886, two years before his *The Entry of Christ Into Brussels*, he produced his superbly simple etching *Christ Calming the Tempest* (no. 72). Ensor repeatedly compared his own life and sufferings with the fate of the crucified Christ. He was fully conscious of the extraordinary mission for which he felt chosen, and the lack of appreciation which was his lot for the full thirteen years of his greatest creativity was his "calvary". It must have brought him immense misery. In his *Skeletons Fighting over a Sour Herring* (1891) he spits out his hatred of his critics. The French title of this work—*Squelettes se disputant un Hareng Saur*—is a pun on his own name which, in Belgium, was pronounced in the French way, and leaves no doubt as to his intention. A macabre joke became a masterpiece.

Much more human and intimate, however, is that miniature painting which he entitled *Ecce Homo* (no. 113) or *Christ and his Critics*. Here he appears again as the scourged Christ, with a crown of thorns, between two of his most implacable critics, Sulzberger and Fétis.

The likeness is sharper than a photograph could ever be. But his identification with Christ, the simple, sincere and natural way in which he dares to make the comparison, and his martyrdom borne with patience,

make this self-portrait inexpressibly moving. The thought never occurs that the holiest is being desecrated as is, indeed, the case with many a page from his hollow-sounding, embarrassing *Scenes from the Life of Christ* series of lithographs executed in 1921.

Finally, the strange and virtually pre-Raphaelite *Our Lady of Solace* (no. 120) of 1892, his final creative year. The humility and forbearance in this work and in *Ecce Homo* ran parallel with his most brilliant and daring creations. This must indicate that days of glorious self-confidence alternated with days of disillusionment and a frantic need for recognition and understanding. While he humbly awaited the Madonna's message, brush and palette in hand, or while painting her as a nursing mother, he may have had a premonition that his talent existed purely by the grace of God and could be withdrawn at any time. This happened in 1893. His star had shone for only thirteen years. After that he continued for nearly another sixty years but, in his own words, "as nothing but an ordinary mortal".

Permeke and Ensor are both masters of genius, but so different one from the other that the word "giant" comes spontaneously to mind in the case of the former, while we instinctively avoid it in connection with Ensor since it contains nothing of his sorrowful, quite exceptional sense of being divinely chosen. Permeke feels driven to revealing the hidden forces which dominate cosmos, creation and visible world. The sea and the earth, and man and animal so inseparable from them. Ensor is a hypersensitive soul, an aristocrat of the spirit to whom the visible world, nature and man, is a savage perplexing reality—and how Flemish and northern this is!—sucking him in, wounding and torturing him and involving his complex mind, torn by terror, in an adventure without issue.
As a cool observer he tells us of his innermost experiences, but he is driven by a fever which, in the end, exhausts his powers. Permeke is a force of nature, as elemental as the creation which overwhelms him. An uncomplicated character; a fisherman and farmer, a man of the people, both during his stay in England and after returning to his own country. First he lived in Ostend, in a dilapidated cottage, struggling against poverty. Then, when he had gained recognition, he moved to a bunker-like house which he had built for himself near the edge of the village of Jabbeke, looking out over farms and fields.

Permeke, with his innate sense of greatness, was a born fighter. While his colours gradually darken, tending to the monochrome, his fierce brush strokes speak of a continuous struggle to give form to the dark powers confronting him. At the same time, his ruthless, hard and expressive contours show his striving for measure and conciseness.

Typical of his will for greatness is the fact that he painted one of his finest masterpieces, *The Fisherwoman* (no. 175) (he called it *Pretty Girl*), in 1921, shortly after seeing Michelangelo's unfinished *Entombment* and *Mary with Jesus and St. John* at the National Gallery in London. This work derives its unforgettable beauty from his sense of the monumental, which is inherent in the fresco technique, from the way he writes out his contours over a surface which appears as an impenetrable wall, from the way he invokes the unattainable by creating an appearance of carelessness and lack of finish, from his power to suggest the raw life of a fisherman and, at the same time, from the rare delicacy of his colours.

Immediately afterwards, when the friends of his youth, De Smet and

Van den Berghe, returned from Holland in 1922 and progressive critics gave him their unconditional support, Permeke, the giant, unleashed all his powers. Traditional, classical representation was swept aside and the rules of perspective and normal physical proportion rejected, with the aim of intensifying pictorial expression. With this programme, "orthodox" Flemish expressionism linked up again with medieval and, even more so, primitive folk art. But Permeke's work does not suggest any specific aesthetic theory. His distortions obey an inner law. They are charged with vitality as if nature itself, with all its sudden outbursts of power, were at work in his creations. When the economic crisis of 1929 had also wrecked the art market, a more meditative mood succeeded the exuberant optimism of the postwar years. Permeke began to model in clay, and overnight became the principal sculptor of his time, forming figures like gigantic monoliths. At the same time he takes an intense interest in the female nude. This results in an abundance of drawings, both lifesize and miniature, many of them of exceptional beauty, and none of them banal.

Toward the end of his life—when he was known as the aged lion—his work acquired a quieter, more intimate quality. He continued to live in close contact with nature, with the land and the sea and also with man. The female nude dominates and he models many small sculptures. While no longer concerned with showing his power and without a thought for any "ism", the visible world is closer to his heart than ever. His land and seascapes, closer to the pre-expressionist tradition than the works from his most revolutionary period, born from pure feeling and expressed in an astonishing wealth of pictorial substance, speak to us in a direct language which is by no means that of a man whose vitality is waning. With the greatest simplicity they express his oneness with the cycle of the seasons—spring, summer, autumn and winter—with the tender morning and the haunting eerie night. And once more, in deepest sorrow and loneliness, he returns to the large canvas to create his most tragic painting, ruthless and infinitely tender at the same time. *Parting* (no. 206) immortalizes the death of Marieke, his wife. And a vague premonition of his own approaching death may have wrung the *Beach in Britanny* (no. 207) from him, with the skeletal wreck of a fishing boat, the stone calvary, and the fishermen with their heavy tread.

He died unexpectedly at the age of 66. Nobody could quite believe that the mighty, invincible oak had been felled.

Gust De Smet

The mildest man imaginable—geniality itself. His works are all rural simplicity, with the scent of flowing honey. His world is that of cow and calf, farmhouse and lush grass, with everywhere the delightful presence of the snub-nosed farm girl who imbues everything with a drowsy sensuous enchantment, the female waiting to be plucked like an apple still dappled with the morning dew. The River Leie is made for lovers in boats, and when the fair is on, the village bedecked with flags, the world shows itself as it really is—in its Sunday best. Everything about him proclaims his confidence, his acceptance of God's sweet creation. Indoors there is the safe comfort of a warm stove, a grandfather clock, a bowl of fruit, coffee on the table. A child comes calling. His wife is at her knitting. But his studio is the holiest of holies where his model takes off her clothes to reveal the bloom of her nakedness. His senses humming, he listens to the birds that sing as if in paradise and he translates their music into a rich and mellow splendour of colour.

Gust De Smet and Frits Van den Berghe, with their totally opposite characters, must have meant a great deal to each other. What the one lacked, the other had in abundance. This must have been why they were always drawn towards each other. Frits was clever and sharp, argumentative and tenacious, relentlessly striving for the absolute. Gust was all emotion, a vibrating cord, always ready to accept and surrender and faltering whenever beauty overpowered him. While the one was heavy-going, businesslike and deliberate, ruthlessly arguing to the bitter end, the other followed in fervent agreement, filled with admiration for such virile decisiveness. Gust picked flowers. Frits tore at the roots. To both, woman, irresistibly enchanting, was desirable above all else, but to the one she was a gentle caressing of the senses while to the other she left the harsh taste of a bitter brew behind. They could both paint "good taverns", the one feeling that life, inexhaustible, goes its joyful way, the other convinced that the elemental passion to which he yields is a cancer. The one loves innocently because everything in this life is simple beauty. The other accepts life though he knows that the creation is nothing but a failure. Frits was the stronger of the two, intellectually, and dragged his friend into the adventure of the expressionist revolution of which the latter was to become the tranquil, "classic" interpreter.

The year 1937, after his great retrospective exhibition in Brussels, marks the beginning of De Smet's post-war expressionist phase. He had surveyed all his works, and in this lengthy dialogue with himself had mercilessly judged his own life. This left him with the feeling that in all those years he had not quite spontaneously and fully given himself. Although there was nothing to reproach himself for, he now intended to work in a different way. E. Langui gave the following summary of a conversation with him:

"From now on, I want to free myself from a kind of formula within which I have said all that could be said in this way. I now want to add to this the finer points of life, the shimmering of luminous colour, vigorous line, liveliness of form. This spontaneity demands more effort than my former, more reasoned, approach. I have lost nothing of my constructive design, but gained immeasurably in freedom and rich variety. My sensitivity is no longer inhibited by reason. I do not disown any of my former work, but I am even more independent of my motifs, and I can now more completely surrender myself to my passion for colour—painting for painting's sake."

From now on he gives himself fully to the onrush of nature with a fullness which, so far, he had merely suspected to exist. To him, this is the equivalent of unconditional surrender to art, to whatever the language of colour and tone evokes in him who experiences everything as a painter. In this way he shows, too, his ultimate complete trust in his heart as it rejoices at the beauty of life—something which, from youth, he had felt as the ever-changing modulation of a warm, deep and intoxicating turbulence.[1]

Rik Wouters

Wouters, intoxicated with life, the sunniest among our painters, was master of both painting and modelling. Both were vital to him, and thanks to this double activity he realized himself fully.

[1] From *Moderne Vlaamse Schilderkunst* Arcade, Brussels 1961, p. 232 and 241.

In one of his finest works—*Woman Ironing* (no. 316)—reality has lost all weight and becomes intangible. A happy scene, painted in light and luminous touches without a single heavy tone, it very simply evokes the intimate graced hour of a sun-filled summer afternoon, as the steam rises from the freshly ironed linen. In Flemish art, this painting is perhaps the best example of the free, "Fauve", post-impressionist style.

But Wouters models in clay at the same time. And when one compares his best paintings with his best bronzes, each of them glorifying Nel Wouters, his adored wife, one cannot escape the impression that, all in all, he goes further as a sculptor than as a painter, that in his bronzes more possibilities of expression, more life, are concentrated than in his most free painting style.

In his best paintings, reality is only lightly suggested, in a shorthand technique that barely touches the canvas. Of the full register of pictorial possibilities which, apart from the magic of light and luminous tones, comprise the full sound of colour and the mysterious world of chiaroscuro, Rik Wouters, in his *Woman Ironing*, uses only the lightest tones. It was only in his last works that approaching death urged him towards tragic harmonies of red and blue. To his generation his mode of working signified the most progressive modernism.

But with his bronzes, things are different. Dark, hermetic, impenetrable in their entirely plastic, three-dimensional volume, they lead a more mysterious, deeper, hidden life.

His late-impressionist technique, adding the clay with thumb and spatula, layer after layer, makes the shape ever more solid, fuller, more complete and more uneven too. A continually changing surface which comes to life as the light plays on it. His modelling is a process of building out of nothing, gradually growing in volume, and from the dialogue with Nel, his model beside him, a work is born that in the most tangible, direct way, and with the juiciness of a ripe fruit, absorbs, integrates and transposes reality. So he observes and approaches reality from many angles.

In his paintings, Wouters simply suggests life, seen from a distance, through the vibration of light and air in which the form evaporates. But his bronzes enclose nature, fully tangible and so concrete that one cannot help touching, caressing, and handling them, swept along by the enthusiasm with which Wouters has taken possession of it, giving it an expression born from the purest of aesthetic emotion. By this wealth of possibilities, life is drawn ever nearer to us.[1]

Frits Van den Berghe

In Flemish Expressionism, Servaes and Van den Berghe are diametrically opposed in their conception of the world. The one believes in God's existence as a first evidence, a truth in which he must live. The other ignores this completely, only believing and accepting as first and final evidence a dark primeval life of inextricable passions and urges, permeating both stone and plant, animal and human. Servaes continually strives heavenward, now shining and tranquil with inner certainty, then steeped in dark despair seemingly without issue—a mystic by nature. Van den Berghe plunges to the bottom of the deepest pools where all is hard and soft, stone and fungus growth, abysses of seething life, dark and

[1]Introduction to the catalogue of the Rik Wouters retrospective exhibition at Mechelen in 1966.

animal-like, and without a trace of "soul" in the elevated human sense of the word. From there he returns satisfied or verging on despair. Bruised and thrown back upon himself, his urge to create drives him on to give form to his experience as sharply as he can and with a maximum of intellectual comprehension. In subjection to the powers they recognize and accept, they both register and express what they have to live through. Their work is uneven but in their best, most inspired, moments, they reveal heights and depths such as we do not find in any 19th century generation.

Van den Berghe does not come to full development until 1928. His first innovating expressionist work is born in the years 1918–1920 when living in Holland and, together with Permeke and De Smet, he remains a revolutionary, hard-line expressionist until 1928. But this is only the first stage of a journey which will make his discover the realm of the subconscious to which his name remains definitely linked. He is to be our first surrealist painter. The erotic urge and the female nude clearly were the mainsprings of his creative activity from the start.

Sexuality he understands more and more as the blind force which rules and determines life from the inside, an inexplicable, nameless, murky obsession of the primeval matter in continuous ferment, working itself out in abortions and monsters, without a single pure, liberating act to restore hope and happiness. Typically Van den Berghe mostly remains free of revulsion or panic. The sexual urge does not invade his blood, sweeping him along and burning him up. He remains inwardly unmoved and, observing with clinical precision, seeks neither solution or escape. He is often compared with Hieronymus Bosch but there is a basic difference between them. Bosch is under the spell of Freudian sexuality to the core of his being but at once lends this fearful darkness a Christian name. It is the spirit of evil which lies in wait for man, everywhere and always, but man can free himself from it.

Van den Berghe, however, does not give "the dark bottom of the pool", where lust is master, the name of evil from whose threat man can escape and which he must resist. He is no believer and, cut off from the concept of good and evil, his view narrowed, he is thrown back upon himself without hope or issue.

In two self-portraits, the one of 1933, the other of 1938, he surrounds himself with monsters depicting his surreal experiences. The 1933 self-portrait is painted with utter deliberation, as was everything he did. With intentional clarity he illustrates the world in which he believes. He presents himself as a monk, eyes averted from the world, fully turned inward, not combative but with a broad, sensuous mouth, resigned and surrounded by his spiritual children. Female nudes nestle at his bosom, one of them offering herself with impudent voluptuousness, the other repulsively primitive. Circling the bald dome of his head are a host of misshapen creatures, half-man, half-spider, and beings like larvae foreshadowing further metamorphoses.

The self-portrait of 1938, painted one year before his death, is tragic and evokes pity. In it he appears as a man broken and destroyed, his mouth closed, horror-struck. There is no issue but with his hand and brush he will automatically go on expressing what his imagination brings him. Behind him is a small pool, the cup filled to the brim from which he cannot slake his thirst. He is there himself, in a monk's habit, hotly

embracing a young woman while two repulsive mouths, opened in an insane laugh, are his companions in this musty realm. A scabrous young hippopotamus appears as the heavy menace which will crush him like a nightmare.

The world he explored and to which he was drawn from the start was one of monsters, abortions and misshapen creatures, steeped in hopeless darkness. It has not given him freedom and in the end it filled him with revulsion. As an artist he bore witness to this with unfailing honesty and faith. He must have felt doomed to bear his fate like a slave. His entire generation, under the pressure of harsh truths and realities, has wanted to return to the most fundamental awareness, experiencing nature and life as absolute forces. They discovered the heights and depths of this, and he who was the most complex, the most laborious among them, also found the time in which he lived the most unbearable.[1]

Léon Spilliaert

A painter in the full sense of the word he is not. Not a man who fully uses the language and technical possibilities of oils. Desiring to express a spiritual content, he chooses less substantial materials, water paints and the matt colours of distemper. He consciously imposes this limitation on himself and from it he derives his power. He expresses a tense inner world. Clearly a soul in distress, he gives shape to the fear that oppresses him in rhythmic, flowing lines and in colours charged with meaning. His language, close to symbolism, reminds one of Jugendstil and Art Nouveau. He is closer to Munch than to his compatriot Mellery, who confidently listens to the stillness of night and receives the deepest voices from it. In his best works, Spilliaert's point of departure are the vivid sensations which life had yielded for him, with forlornness and fear as the ground themes. He is from Ostend but his work shows no trace of the bustling season there. He feels drawn to the infinity of the sea, the loneliness of beach and dyke and a woman in distress. They mirror his own nameless fear, lonely and thrown back upon himself. When he illustrates imaginary themes his lines and colours acquire immediate expressiveness because, to the man behind them, night and death and the unnameable are not empty words but haunting realities.

Later, Spilliaert returned to nature without "ulterior motives". In ink, lightly touched up with water colours, he draws tree trunks for their power, solid form and, above all, their inner hidden soul. In that intimate dialogue with nature, where man stands back, fear vanishes and he makes his peace with the unutterable mystery which is the heartbeat of all life. In his modest border territory, at the edge of what could be called the broad sweep of "great" art, in the field of illustration, held in such low esteem by most, he has plumbed depths and sounded a voice for which many a highly respected painter may envy him.[2]

Henri Evenepoel

He was not yet two years old when his young mother died at the age of 28. He himself was barely 27 when he died suddenly, just as he was about to make a permanent home in Brussels, city of his fathers, after seven years in Paris. At that moment he had hoped to start his career. His formative years were over, his new studio awaited him, and he was about to marry Louise, his cousin who is familiar to us from the portraits he painted of her and her two children.

1 W. Vanbeselaere from *Moderne Vlaamse Schilderkunst*, Arcade, Brussels, 1961, pp. 255, 256, 258, 260, 268.

2 W. Vanbeselaere from *Moderne Vlaamse Schilderkunst*, Arcade, Brussels, 1961, p. 156.

There is something about him that makes him ever lovable. It is everyone's dream to reconnoitre life as he did insatiably with the privileged perception of youth, and genuine simplicity. Before experiencing life itself his sensitive heart is moved by it. His interest centres on man in his everyday doings. Whether inspired by beauty or struck by human grief, he takes no sides, neither criticising nor condemning, but takes note, admires, and wonders. We are irresistibly attracted by this generous attitude toward the visible world. He loves the child, boy and girl, as he loves an opening flower, for nothing surpasses the delight of being a flower. Beside the child, one single woman appears in his life. She is his cousin, the young mother who was also his beloved and whose sorrow fills us with gentle concern.

The men whose portraits he painted—his father, to begin with—were all his friends. Never indifferent to his models, groping for the essence in each of them, he did nothing but totally give himself in an intimate dialogue. All his other works, the street, market, and tavern scenes, his Sunday walks, the town views and landscapes, his discoveries as a tourist in Algeria, his still-lifes and his flower pieces, speak of the same admiration and passionate longing to absorb life, without prejudice, without posing heavy problems, but with the feverish haste, the sharp penetration and the unconditional love of a hypersensitive being, destined to die early.

The field which he covers reveals a receptive, observant heart. But with this, nothing has yet been said about his excellence as a painter. Evenepoel's significance lies in the fact that he expressed his experience of life in a richly varied scale of pictorial values which moves us deeply. Viewed at a distance of seventy years, and across art trends which deny the age-old reconciliation of reproducing nature with artistic transposition, this makes him appear as the most gentle of masters, splendidly surviving all vicissitudes and fashions of taste.[1]

Jan Brusselmans

Brusselmans is the dourest, most unyielding of expressionists. Limiting himself to a fragment of what he has observed—land or seascape, still-life or figure study—he subjects it to the harsh demands of his style and remodels normal reality into expressive form. What he has observed, he takes out of its context and tears asunder, then puts it together again, giving shape to the essence of his observation in the most immediate, elementary manner with maximum freedom from realism and with the pictorial means of line, colour, tone and composition.

It has taken a long time—until after his death, sad to say—before the world discovered that the intentional spareness of form, the coarse bread Brusselmans offers us has a rare and pure taste. His vision could not be more basic. It is without any trace of individual or sentimental emotion which would make his work more easily accessible. On the contrary, he suppresses any tendency to surrender himself spontaneously to the first impression received. He reduces line and colour to their barest essentials, to the greatest expressiveness. Colour and form are not raw wood, to be handled with careless abandon. They are worked and reworked until they express with absolute purity the essence of his experience. Only when one has understood the deeper significance of the carpentered constructions which are his paintings, his ascetic self-limitation, and his concentrated vitality, does his work open up to reveal a wealth of pulsating life. Then it also becomes clear that with him there is no question of

[1] W. Vanbeselaere from *Moderne Vlaamse Schilderkunst*, Arcade, Brussels, 1961, pp. 217 and 219.

working, come what may, to a preconceived formula. The initial observation remains decisive, setting his artistic conscientiousness in motion, and leading him to the one and only solution for each particular case. His work is poor and monotonous in appearance only. It shines with life, jubilantly soaring up from its own limitations.[1]

Edgard Tytgat

One cannot help loving this unique painter, the pure form of his work giving us new joys whenever we see it. He is a born artist, never guilty of an impurity. But above all he is a delightful story-teller. He keeps up a continuous narration, whether about nature or life or about something he had read that tempted him to take up his brush. What he says, and the way he says it, has the charm of a story told by a child, breathless and stammering in its excitement about something it has never seen before. And as with the child, each word, each picture of his has intense significance. It is revealing on two levels. First for the reality as it is observed, and, secondly, for what it shows at the same time about life itself.

All the world is suddenly reduced to an intense observation made by a wondering child, as if it only had that aspect. Seen with child-like immediacy it becomes utterly simple, fine and fragile. Any complementary thought or description, any addition based on knowledge, is intuitively kept out as being totally superfluous. His world is a house of cards that could collapse at any moment.

The wonder of it all is that Tytgat has remained a stammering child throughout his life, fully retaining the gift of continuous wonder, admiration and elation. His art, human through and through, cannot help but captivate us all, as a rare treasure. The fact that with him and through him we recapture what we have all so hopelessly early and irrevocably lost—the gift of child-like observation, spontaneous, innocent, and without any suspicion or reserve—fills us with both joy and sadness.

Tytgat's oeuvre is a continuous, charming game with all the innocence and clumsiness that goes with it. Approached with a sober mind, it is silly nonsense. But it is a very real and convincing world, an oasis of tenderness. Tytgat's imagination starts up as soon as he opens his eyes, sees the room where he is and looks out of the open window which gives an infinite dimension to the world, where fables, legends and miracles happen as they do in the merry-go-round at the fair, the shooting gallery, the circus, the child or the woman whose portrait he paints and the nude posing for him. But Tytgat is no child. He is an adult who experiences the world as a child and who knows full well what makes his talent so charming, nurturing both charm and talent with deliberate care.

His erotic pleasures are those of any normal man but he gives vent to this urge in his own unique way—as a libertine, airy, saucy, bold and provocative. This charmer catches life in the act and immediately spills the beans. He reveals things which must have raised a secret chuckle in any one of us at one time or another. We forgive him anything because nobody can cut such playful capers as he does, and even when he goes a trifle too far, we accept it since he is always ready with the perplexed protest—"But it is like that, isn't it?"[2]

[1] W. Vanbeselaere from *Moderne Vlaamse Schilderkunst*, Arcade, Brussels, 1961, pp. 159 and 163.

[2] W. Vanbeselaere from *Moderne Vlaamse Schilderkunst*, Arcade, Brussels, 1961, pp. 214 and 216.

Modern Flemish Painting

by Denys Sutton

The immense achievement of the Flemish painters of the fifteenth century —Jan van Eyck, the Master of Flémalle and Rogier van der Weyden, to name only the chief men—and later of Rubens, Van Dyck and Jordaens, has tended to give rise to the impression that Flemish art expired with the seventeenth century. This was more or less the case during the eighteenth century when no painters of any consequence worked in the regions that now constitute Belgium. The situation altered, however, after the consolidation of Belgium as a nation in 1830. From then onwards there emerged a local School with a decided flavour: artistic activities in the country were also helped to no small degree by a nationalistic current and by growing prosperity.

Nevertheless, except for a handful of artists, chief of whom is James Ensor, not much is known in Great Britain about Belgian art of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, recently, interest in Belgian culture during this period has developed not only here but generally. This is partly due to the realisation that Emile van der Velde and Baron Horta occupy major positions as masters of Art Nouveau decoration and architecture and that Brussels boasts one of the principal monuments of this style, the Palais Stoclet. This famous building was not designed by a Belgian but by Josef Hoffmann of Vienna and decorated by Gustav Klimt (as visitors to the Academy's recent exhibition of the Vienna Secession will recall); in its prime it housed a marvellous and eclectic art collection, comprising superlative Italian primitives—one is now in the National Gallery—Chinese works of art and much else besides.

Another reason has also prompted a closer study of Belgian art, namely the fact that Surrealism has been specially productive in Belgium. Delvaux and Magritte are both Belgians and their involvement in this style appears, to some extent, to spring from a national tradition which may be traced back, without too much exaggeration, to Bosch and nearer our time to Ensor, Khnopff and Spilliaert. Against such a background, it is understandable that curiosity about Belgian modern art should be keen.

This exhibition does not set out to provide a panorama of modern Belgian art; its compass is narrower for it attempts to isolate one specific trend in Belgian painting—the Flemish tradition—as it exists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is clear that at the start the new artistic movement in Belgium derived a powerful lead from François-Joseph Navez. This portrait painter was a pupil of Jacques-Louis David and was not unworthy of his master. David had spent some years of exile in Brussels and he was not the only French artist or writer to have lived there—Baudelaire, Victor Hugo and Rodin were others.

As early as 1855, the French writer Edmond About observed that the Belgian School was then the most important in Europe after the French. From that date onwards, the originality of the many painters active in Belgium was attested to by the work of Alfred Stevens, long popular in Great Britain, Hippolyte Boulenger, Louis Dubois, Louis Artan, Guillaume Vogels and Félicien Rops. Although many Belgian artists looked towards Paris, then a mecca of art, they were able to do so without forfeiting their

independence. A painter such as Théo van Rysselberghe is a case in point; he absorbed the influence of pointillism without surrendering his own personality. Despite the French flavour in his art, it is unmistakably Belgian, just as is the writing of Rodenbach and Verhaeren.

Much was owed in Belgium in the 1890s to the patronage of the cultivated middle classes, especially to the activity of Octave Maus, an impresario of taste, who formed the Société des XX which supported concerts and presented a glittering array of exhibitions; these included work by Toulouse-Lautrec and Seurat, Whistler and Sickert. La Libre Esthètique was another exhibiting society which gave admirable support to modern art. The climate of opinion was propitious for the break-through of a modern movement even though, at the outset, a painter such as Ensor suffered rejection.

Naturally, Brussels was the chief artistic centre but so was Antwerp where Rodin's work had been shown in the 1870s. This wealthy commercial city with a long artistic tradition was very independent artistically; it remained a stronghold of Northern realism. This current was best expressed in the painting of Henri de Braekeleer (1840-88). He is not represented in the exhibition, for he belongs to an older generation, but his contribution helped to determine the character of much that was to follow; he is one of the virtually unknown masters of the nineteenth century as is the Danish painter Køpke.

At first sight, Braekeleer's *The Inn, "Het Loodhuis" at Antwerp* or *Man in a Chair* might seem to be excessively academic and anecdotic but his strength lies in his technique and in the justness of his eye for tones and for suggesting space; rich reds and browns compose mosaics of colour—surfaces, which as Verhaeren said, have the appeal of Cordoba leather. His microscopic treatment of detail has led some critics to compare his work to that of the founders of the Flemish School; his style was also enriched by his knowledge of the Dutch cabinet painters of the seventeenth century.

The early works of James Ensor show, too, that he was as fascinated as was Braekeleer by painting interiors—those heavily impasted views of salons which he did in the 1880s. Yet his interpretation of bourgeois society is different from Braekeleer's. Whereas the older artist presented the scene literally without offering literary or psychological interpretations, Ensor sought to render moods, usually of tension or *ennui*. These recall the writings of the naturalists, Zola or Arnold Bennett, for instance, and *The Afternoon at Ostend* (no. 52) or *Sombre Lady* (no. 55) could even be illustrations for *The Old Wives' Tale*.

Ensor's mind was complex and tormented; he was haunted by the figure of Christ. Yet eschewing a conventional vision such as was found in so much contemporary religious painting, he created, like Bosch, strange and hallucinatory pictures such as *The Entry of Christ into Brussels* (no. 97), a large-scale work in which Christ is lost in an enormous crowd and masked revellers hold the stage. This picture sums up Ensor's achievement—his bold colour and his daring unusual imagery. The mask held a particular fascination for him: so did the carnival, a popular form of letting off steam that has religious significance. He was also intrigued by the skeleton. Thus the painter who had started as a realist became a pioneer of modern art.

Ensor's range was wide. As befitted a seaside artist, for he lived at Ostend, city of seafood and jollity, the challenge of finding pictorial equivalents for the changing pattern of the sea captivated him; his colours are splendid and subtle, effervescent and dramatic. As a good Fleming he was drawn to still-life: one of his most virtuoso efforts in this genre is the colourful *The Ray* (no. 122).

Unfortunately two of the most gifted Belgian painters active before 1914, Henri Evenepoel and Rik Wouters, died young but not before they had revealed their talents. Evenepoel, who lived to be 27, was one of the many foreign artists attracted by the lure of Paris and, just as did Matisse and Rouault, worked in the studio of Gustave Moreau. Yet there is no real *fin de siècle* tinge to his work; rather he was drawn to popular types, soldiers and their girls in the Bois de Boulogne who call cousin to the figures in Steinlen, and studies of vegetable and poultry sellers that resemble Whistler's Chelsea or Paris oils of similar themes. Evenepoel was a portrait painter of distinction, as may be seen from the striking *The Spaniard in Paris* (no. 167). Like Matisse and the Canadian artist J. W. Morrice, Evenepoel visited North Africa. He was there in 1897 and, no doubt, remembering Moreau's use of pure colour, he painted a series of remarkable pictures of local scenes which are proto-Fauve.

Rik Wouters also admired French art. He visited Paris in 1913, where he underwent the influence of Rodin, Renoir and above all Cézanne. The lessons he learnt from the last-named are evident in his treatment of tables—a Cézannian angle of vision is employed—and in his sketchy handling of oil paint, used almost as if it were water-colour, did not mean that a search for pure form preoccupied him. He was not concerned with analysis but with recording the pleasures of existence. He loved beautiful women and, just as Rubens had delighted in painting his young wife, so he found in Nel Wouters his favourite model. His pictures of her, dashed in with warm reds and blues, evoke a luxurious and carefree domesticity. The image of happiness these pictures radiate have a poignant touch: Wouters and his wife had a short time together; and Wouters was to die blind. However his paintings are among the most unaffected of those depicting "*la belle époque*".

A domestic note marks the painting of his friend Edgar Tytgat, that simple-hearted artist of the suburbs of Brussels, who was in this country during the 1914–18 war. Tytgat had a naive streak; he was essentially a popular painter—a much less sophisticated Raoul Dufy even. He liked to suggest the pleasures of a Sunday outing. He was an artist who naturally responded to Chagall and, like his hero, was keen on painting a dream-like vision of existence. In later years his work changed and he tackled religious themes.

A streak of naivété is also to be discerned in the work of the self-taught artist Léon Spilliaert whose career was furthered by Verhaeren. Spilliaert is one of the most original painters of the time in Belgium. He owed something to Art Nouveau, as is evident in the broad bands of colour treated in a calligraphic manner that occur in some of his works, and to the mysterious world of Belgian Symbolism so well represented by Fernand Khnopff. Spilliaert was thus one of these painters who pave the way for the Surrealism of Delvaux and Magritte. It remains an interesting question as to why this movement should have proved so fertile in Belgium.

The other movement which found such support in Belgium is Expressionism. In his recent admirable short book on Expressionism, one of the first in English to provide an overall picture of the movement in painting as in literature, John Willett observed how the Flemish masters were connected with the second Ecole de Saint Laethem-Martin, which had been a haunt of Symbolists at an earlier stage, and how they were the only European painters aware of the German movement. He pointed out that Expressionism was the dominant tendency in Belgian and more specifically Flemish painting right up to 1939 and he says: "This contrast within so geographically compact and linguistically unified an area is undoubtedly attributable to the need of the Belgian Flemish to assert their cultural independence of the French". And chapter and verse are supplied to support this contention.

Despite the connections with German art, the character of Flemish Expressionism as shown in the work of Frits van den Berghe, Gust De Smet, Jan Brusselmans and Constant Permeke is distinct from that of the Germans. Flemish Expressionism is not so neurotic as is the German movement. There is no indication of any concern with sex other than in a most straightfoward way—no flicker of that complex eroticism loved by Franz Wedekind. It is true that Frits van der Berghe expresses a sense of anguish in some of his paintings but the sexual content is generalised rather than particularised: his morbidity may be traced back to Rops. Flemish Expressionism in general is more rooted in the earth than German; Flemish painters did not paint street life. In the work of Gust de Smet, a Cubist influence may also be discerned, one that was clearly shown in some of his *mondain* pictures of the '20s.

Flemish Expressionism found its most able exponent in Permeke. His work is powerful and direct and the depiction, either in painting or drawing, of the plasticity of the human form was for him all-important: his men and women are huge. He sought to block in their outlines so as to suggest their monumentality and their almost primaeval quality. Such painting has a proletarian touch and goes back to the peasants found in the Nuenen period of Van Gogh. His large-scale figures have some affinities with the sculpture of Henry Moore and the miners of Josef Hermann. He loved large wind-swept or snow-clad landscapes and his aim in painting these was not so much, as might be expected, to represent the reality of the scene as to express the emotions he experienced when contemplating the colours and forms of his native soil.

Part of the fascination of this exhibition lies in the way it shows how an individual School of character can exist, especially when directed by a nationalistic current. It says much for the force of Flemish painting that it has made such a decided contribution and in a way that maintains the continuity of the tradition. It is all the more fascinating and even instructive to observe this phenomenon now that Belgium is at the heart of the New Europe.

A Chronology of Modern Flemish Art

Groupe Des XX: grouping of non-academic artists in Brussels, established in 1883 and dissolved in 1893. *L'Art Moderne*, founded in 1881, was their primary organ of propaganda. Organized exhibitions of Belgian and foreign artists. James Ensor was a member.

La Libre Esthetique: group in Brussels arising from "Les XX" in 1893 and dispersed in 1914. James Ensor was a member, J. Brusselmans started in the group.

Kunst Van Heden - L'art Contemporain: collection of artists in Antwerp founded in 1905 by F. Franck. Organized a show almost every year until 1955. Members: J. Ensor, R. Wouters, L. Spilliaert, C. Permeke, Fr. Van den Berghe, G. De Smet, J. Brusselmans, E. Tytgat.

Galerie Giroux: avant-garde gallery in Brussels opened by a French couple, Georges and Gabrielle Giroux in 1911. Rik Wouters made a contract with this gallery in 1912. Most expressionists made their debut or showed there.

Sélection: art shop opened by A. De Ridder and P. G. Van Hecke in Brussels in 1920, closed in 1931. They sold paintings, organized exhibitions, took part in other shows, and issued information in their bulletin "Sélection" which grew to be an important art periodical. Between 1928 and 1931 the last twelve editions appeared in the form of a monograph. Practically all the expressionists showed with Sélection. Members who from 1927 to 1931 were contracted to submit half of their work to Van Hecke: G. De Smet, Fr. Van den Berghe, E. Tytgat.

Le Centaure: gallery and periodical in Brussels, founded by W. Schwarzenberg in 1920, closed in 1931. Published *Le Centaure* from 1926 to 1930. Nearly all expressionists showed with Le Centaure. Under contract G. De Smet, Fr. Van den Berghe, E. Tytgat had to submit the other half of their work to Le Centaure.

Societé Auxiliaire des Expositions du Palais des Beaux-Arts, set up in Brussels in 1929. Organized exhibitions and published *L'Art Vivant*. Fr. Van den Berghe, G. De Smet, Permeke and Tytgat were members.

Zaal Ars: After the economic crisis of 1931 Ghent defended the needs of the painters of Latem. The Zaal Ars gallery was established in Ghent by art historians A. Janssens, O.P., and G. Chabot and art dealer A. Vyncke.

In 1931 the first number of *Kunst* appeared, a magazine which dealt especially with the Latem artists.

Catalogue Note

The Catalogue has been arranged in alphabetical order of artists. The group of entries for each artist is prefaced by an appreciation, biography and bibliography.

The measurements have been given in inches and centimetres and, in the case of paintings and drawings, height precedes width. The metric conversion has been made to the nearest quarter of an inch.

Jean Brusselmans

The Brabant landscape and the North Sea, as well as still lifes and people are the themes which were Brusselmans' particular inspiration for his studiously ascetic works. To begin with he painted realistically, in the manner of Courbet, and adopted elements from the impressionists, fauvistes, constructivists and cubists. Colour becomes more important after his meeting with Oleffe. Brusselmans, with his authoritative, independent spirit works all these elements into a very personal form of expression. The subtle impressionist touch broadened to the typical cubist brushstroke. Natural data, treated as objects, release him from realism and from expressionist subjectivity. He rebuilds the "seen" world in vivid, balanced compositions which he simplifies still further. He also simplifies drastically his composition, his colouring and perspective.

Like Tytgat, Brusselmans, who only found recognition rather late, occupies a special place in Flemish expressionism. He was the constructivist-expressionist *par excellence*, severe and cool. He is a transitional figure in the development of non-figurative art and prepared the way for lyrical abstraction in Belgium.

Biography

Painter and lithographer, born in Brussels on 13 June 1884, son of a tailor. He learns the profession of engraver-lithographer (which perhaps later influenced the directness of his drawing), and attends evening classes at the Brussels Academy. From 1904 to 1906 he takes painting lessons at the same academy as a pupil of Is. Verheyen.

From 1906 to 1914 he works in seclusion in order to exhibit in 1912 together with R. Wouters, Schirren and other Brabant fauvistes in the Galerie Giroux in Brussels. During the first World War he remains in Auderghem where he strikes up a friendship with Oleffe. In 1924 he settles permanently in Dilbeek, where he dies on 9 January 1953.

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Jean Brusselmans, Palais des Beaux Arts, Brussels, 1952 (exhibition catalogue, introduction by P. Haesaerts)

Jean Brusselmans Retrospective, Cercle Royal Artistique et Littéraire de Charleroi, XXIXth show, Charleroi, 1955, (exhibition catalogue, introduction by R. Lyr and P. Haesaerts)

1
Plasterer 1924
Oil on canvas
39½ × 45⅛in / 100 × 116cm
Count Weemaes

2
Symphony in grey 1928
Oil on canvas
35½ × 37⅜in / 85 × 96cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

3
Apple-trees in bloom 1931
Oil on canvas
43¼ × 43¼in / 110 × 110cm
Mme. T. Herbert, Courtrai

4
Garden 1931
39½ × 40in / 100 × 102cm
Mr and Mrs P. E. Crowet, Brussels

5
The rainbow 1932
Oil on canvas
40 × 40in / 102 × 102cm
E. Van Zuylen

6
Blue seascape 1933
Oil on canvas
26 × 23½in / 66 × 60cm
E. Haeberli, Brussels

7
The white wall 1933
Oil on canvas
27½ × 31in / 69·5 × 79cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

8 *Illustrated in colour page 52*
Harvest 1934
Oil on canvas
59 × 41⅜in / 150 × 105cm
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Liège

9
Harvest 1935
Oil on canvas
39½ × 43¼in / 100 × 110cm
L. Bogaerts

10
Still-life 1935
Oil on canvas
49¼ × 55in / 120 × 140
L. Bogaerts

11
Self-portrait 1935
Oil on canvas
39¼ × 33½in / 100 × 85cm
L. Bogaerts

12
Storm 1936
Oil on canvas
59⅜ × 59⅜in / 152 × 152cm
Mme. T. Herbert, Courtrai

13
Suburb 1936
Oil on canvas
45¼ × 46¼in / 115 × 118cm
R. Neefs, Antwerp

14
Brabant Landscape 1936
Oil on canvas
56¼ × 52¼in / 143 × 133cm
Private Collection

15
The dunes 1936
Oil on canvas
31½ × 27½in / 80 × 70cm
M. M. De Cocq, Sint-Katelijne-Waver

16
Nude with white linen 1937
Oil on canvas
48½ × 57in / 123 × 145
Museum of Fine Arts, Ghent

17 *Illustrated page 53*
'Pajotten' country 1938
Oil on canvas
43¼ × 45in / 110 × 114cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

18
Still-life with red jug 1938
Oil on canvas
44 × 48in / 112 × 122cm
Mme. T. Herbert, Courtrai

19
Large interior 1939
Oil on canvas
59 × 59in / 150 × 150cm
Municipal Credit of Belgium, Brussels

20 *Illustrated page 54*
Golden seascape 1939
Oil on canvas
22 × 34½in / 56 × 88cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels

21
Winter landscape 1942
Oil on canvas
37½ × 39⅜in / 95 × 101cm
Permeke Museum, Jabbeke

Gust De Smet

Every Flemish expressionist of the Latest group began as a luministic expressionist, attracted by the work of E. Claus. The first World War put an end to olympically peaceful pictures conjured on to a canvas in dots of colour. Expressionism was from the outset an attitude to life, and not an artistic theory, which explains the great difference in forms used. In Holland De Smet breaks for ever with impressionism under the influence of Sluyters, Gestel and Ch. Toorop, and their teacher Le Fauconnier. Through *Das Kunstblatt* he becomes familiar with German expressionism, much wilder and with a tragic tone.
In the twenties, under the influence of the Brussels art galleries Sélection and Le Centaure, to which from 1927 to 1931 he was under contract painting subjects such as circus tents, clowns, acrobats, prostitutes, and in more subdued colours, farmers and farmers' wives, hunters and children. During the thirties – after the failure of Sélection and Le Centaure – the angular shape, influenced by the cubists, disappears completely and makes way for a delicate play of light and dark in clearly balanced volumes, just as Léger was to do in France. His preference now turns exclusively to still lifes, flowers and the rustic little man of his own district: peasants in the field, with animals, at the fair, hunting and making love. At this time there also appear the paradisaically pure nudes. Gradually the bright colours give place during this period to warm and deep browns and ochres; the outline becomes more forceful. At the end of his life he is using clear, shining outlines on dark areas of colour.

Gust De Smet is the most classical of the Flemish expressionists, and the most humane. The pastoral fervour is upset by every piece of storytelling, and in no way disturbs the monumentality. E. Langui called Permeke "the body", Van den Berghe "the soul" and De Smet "the heart" of Flemish expressionism.

Biography

Painter and draughtsman, born in Ghent on 21 January 1877. With his brother Léon he helped his father in painting decorative panels. From 1888 to 1895 he takes lessons at the Ghent Academy with, among others, J. Van Biesbroeck and Jean Delvin. In 1898 he settles with Augusta van Hoorebeke in Ghent and from 1901 to 1911 in the Leie district, probably all the time at Sint-Martens-Latem. In 1911 he is once more in Ghent for the education of his son who, at the age of 19 was to die in an accident. In 1914 he flees the war and lives in Holland in successively Amsterdam, Hilversum, Blaricum and Laren, a long time in the company of Fritz Van den Berghe. At the end of 1921 and the beginning of 1922 he came frequently to Belgium in connexion with "Sélection" set up by P.-G. Van Hecke and A. de Ridder, of which he soon becomes the pivot. In 1920 he shows in Brussels and Paris. In 1922 he returns permanently to Belgium and settles respectively in Kalmthout, Ostend (with Permeke), Bachte-Maria-Leerne and Afsnee, moving to Deurne in 1928 where he passes away on 8 October 1943.

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Gustave De Smet, Cercle Artistique et Littéraire de Charleroi, XXVIIth Show, Charleroi, 1953 (exhibition catalogue, introduction by L. Van Puyvelde)

Gustave De Smet, Retrospective Exhibition, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp, 1961 (exhibition catalogue) introduction by W. Vanbeselaere)

22
Fishing village 1919
Oil on canvas
65½ × 78⅜in / 166 × 200cm
Groeninge Museum, Bruges

23
Man with bottle 1920
Oil on canvas
48 × 31½in / 122 × 81cm
Mme. T. Herbert, Courtrai

24
Woman at coffee-table 1921
Oil on canvas
31½ × 28in / 80 × 71cm
Mme. T. Herbert, Courtrai

25 *Illustrated page 55*
Married couple on the door-step 1923
Oil on canvas
21½×26½in / 54×67 cm
M. Mabille, Sint-Genesius-Rode

26
Ostend docks 1923
Oil on canvas
45½×34½in / 115×88 cm
Dr. A. Sierens, Aalst

27
Beatrice 1923
Oil on canvas
55×39½in / 140×100 cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels

28
The painter and his wife 1924
Oil on canvas
59×49½in / 150×125 cm
Private Collection, Basle

29
The pleasure-boat 1925
Oil on canvas
28×31in / 71×79 cm
Mme. T. Herbert, Courtrai

30
The language of flowers 1927
Oil on canvas
36½×37in / 93×94 cm
Mme. T. Herbert, Courtrai

31
Blue nude-Henriette 1928
Oil on canvas
38½×35½in / 98×90cm
M. Naessens, Meise

32
The village 1928
Oil on canvas
25½×32in / 65×81cm
M. Naessens, Meise

33
The caravan 1930
Oil on canvas
25½×32in / 65×81cm
Dr. J. Hoet, Ghent

34
Nude on a bed 1930
Oil on canvas
36½×29in / 93×74cm
Municipal Museum, Ostend

35
The worshipper 1931
Oil on canvas
34½×24½in / 87×62cm
Mme. T. Herbert, Courtrai

36
Reclining nude 1931
Oil on paper
17¾×24½in / 45×62cm
E. Bastaens, Berchem-Antwerp

37
The big ball 1932
Oil on canvas
51½×58½in / 131×149cm
Mme. T. Herbert, Courtrai

38 *Illustrated in colour page 57*
Country-fair 1933
Oil on canvas
52×45½in / 132×116cm
Museum of Fine Arts, Ghent

39
Girl with small bouquet 1938
Oil on canvas
45½×31½in / 115×80cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

40
Flowers under a bell-glass 1939
Oil on canvas
25½×33½in / 65×85cm
Private collection

41
Still-life with white coffee-pot 1939
Oil on canvas
24×26in / 61×66cm
G. Claessens, Ghent

42
Girl with red ribbon 1940
Oil on canvas
13×10½in / 33×26cm
A. Taevernier, Ghent

43
Still-life with flowers 1942
Oil on canvas
25×18in / 65×46cm
A. Taevernier, Ghent

44
Standing nude undated
Oil on canvas
39 × 22in / 98·5 × 56cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

45
Still-life undated
Oil on canvas
19 × 25¼in / 48 × 64cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

James Ensor

He belongs to the generation of painters whose work is bid for now that French impressionism is at a premium. In this generation, which we can call the generation of symbolists, grows the desire for self-awareness, the germ of opposition to the mere reality of things. Painting becomes the expression of subjective reality.

From 1878 to 1885, the so-called dark period, Ensor observes people, the sea, the town, things and particularly the play of light. His works are set heavily in paint with a palette knife, drawn with realism, but coloured with a strong impressionism. The sombre colours express a wistful earnestness. The series of drawing rooms is well-known.

Along with the paintings there appear at this time many drawings and quick sketches, realistically capturing life with sensitive reverence. There are a surprisingly large number of copies after Rembrandt, Turner (problems of light), Callot, Daumier, Forain, Rowlandson (satire). Ensor used these copies as he used nature: he "recreated" them. This process of re-creation was indeed characteristic among the symbolists.

Around 1882 Ensor's palette becomes lighter and the paint is gradually put on more thinly.

1885–86 is a period of transition. His production of etchings and drawings overtakes his production of paintings, the quality is comparable. His light becomes less tangible, more radiant but also more destructive of form. It attains a spiritual value as in Rembrandt's work. Talking about his series of drawings *Les auréoles du Christ ou les sensibilités de la lumière* he says, "They aren't subjects, they're lights". In his painted work the colours become less intimate, the atmosphere more poisonous.

In 1887 he paints biblical pictures in which the shimmer of the light is so intense that the picture becomes a lyrical abstraction. This change of style is undoubtedly due to his contact with the work of Turner.

Also in 1887 three themes make their appearance: masks, death and demons. Ensor loves nature and objects: to man he is merciless. In 1888 he produces *The Entry of Christ into Brussels*, in which concentrated, bright and vivid colours are set cleanly against each other. This painting is a grandiose plastic revenge on humanity, who will not recognize him and his creative genius. He degrades man to a masquerader. Death now mingles frequently in his world of imagination. He appears, not as the antithesis of life, but as an absurdity, as a fact that is, with which we can find no common way, and to which we then react with irony. After the mask and death there is a third theme: the relationship of Ensor with himself as an artist. He gave repeated expression to his torment and injury as an artist. He appears as a Christ crowned with thorns, or surrounded by a crowd of threatening demons.

In 1892 Ensor's creative drive is renewed. A young Flemish psychiatrist has recently investigated this phenomenon. Right into the last years of his life Ensor remakes certain earlier compositions in lighter, pastel-like colours. He paints further bizarre pictures, still lifes, flowers, seascapes. Arabesques roll like an obsession across the whole surface of his drawings and paintings. Because of the pastel lightness of his colour, his paintings have the poetry of a sunset, of a recent dream. At this moment recognition arrives. Ensor's symbolism appeared at the same time as Gauguin's in France. Fauvistes, expressionists and surrealists in Belgium give Ensor credit as a pioneer.

Biography

This painter, etcher and draughtsman is born in Ostend on 13 April 1860 to an English father and a Flemish mother. At the age of 13 he receives lessons from two painters from Ostend. From 1877 to 1879 he takes lessons at the Brussels Academy as a pupil of Portaels. In 1879 he returns to Ostend and settles there permanently in his parents' house with his mother, father, sister Mitche and an aunt. His mother runs a souvenir stall by the sea wall. The carnival masks, Chinese porcelain and seashells which are sold there are used by Ensor in his paintings. His first show is in "Chrysalide" in 1881. Although he is a co-founder of the avant-garde group "Les XX", his work is almost systematically rejected from exhibitions, even by his own group.

In 1887 his father dies. He is the only member of the family who understood him and stood by him. In 1888 he paints *The Entry of Christ into Brussels*, new in conception as well as in execution. It is the complete opposite of the world of olympian tranquility which Seurat evoked in *Un dimanche d'été à la Grande-Jatte*, exhibited in 1887 in Brussels by "Les XX".

Not until 1896 does the Belgium state purchase an early work, *De Lampenjongen* from the dark period. In 1899 the Parisian publication *La Plume* devotes a special edition to Ensor; in 1908 there follows a study by Emile Verhaeren. The big breakthrough comes in 1920 when the Galerie Giroux devotes a large exhibition to the 60-year-old artist. After Brussels comes Antwerp with an exhibition in 1921, organized by Kunst van Heden, the Jeu de Paume museum in Paris in 1927 and the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels in 1929. 1930 brings official recognition: Ensor is elevated to the peerage and receives the title of Baron. He dies in Ostend on 19 November 1949. In 1951 the Royal Museum in Antwerp organized the most important retrospective exhibition.

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Ensor, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, 1970 (exhibition catalogue, introduction W. Vanbeselaere, U. G. Johnsson, P. Reuterwörd)

The influence of Turner on Ensor

That the works of Turner have had an effect on Ensor is indisputable. But when the confrontation with Turner's work occurred remains questionable even now.

Contemporaries E. Verhaeren[1] and G Le Roy[2] speak of a four-day trip to London in 1892, of a number of journeys to Paris and of a visit to Amsterdam and Haarlem with Vogels. P. Desmedt[3] reports an outing to Zeeland with E. Demolder which probably took place sometime before 1895. In the most recent works, such as the one by P. Haesaerts, only the visit to London in 1892 is mentioned. But Ensor must already have seen work by Turner earlier, in 1885-86. In 1885 he is 25 and has already completed a number of masterworks which are unappreciated by his contemporaries. Does Ensor become unsure? Does he want to paint in another manner so that people should finally believe in his creative genius? Very likely. Round about 1885-86 his output of paintings grows steadily less, while he starts etching and concentrates on the series of drawings *Les auréoles du Christ* – in fact studies in light. The study of light had become the main problem of the impressionists, but Turner had already reproduced light in masterly fashion long before, light as the bearer of the unreal sphere of his dreamworld. In Ensor's work there is also a striking change in the way he handles the light in his landscapes. The first instance of this is to be seen in *Zonsondergang* (Ostend Museum) painted in 1885, a work which, without Turner is unimaginable. In the series of drawings *Les auréoles du Christ ou la sensibilité de la lumière*, begun in 1885, Ensor is seeking the "unreal" light that he also admires so much in Rembrandt. But Turner, too, painted biblical pictures where the concentration of light often occurs in a semi-circular spatial formation, which is clearly to be seen in *The Angel standing in the Sun* (1846, Tate Gallery, London). It is not impossible that Ensor has already seen this work, for *De val der opstandige engelen* (Royal Museum, Antwerp) painted in 1889, is without doubt related to the above-mentioned painting: a dome of light with a figure at its centre, below, in the foreground, little figures, and, in roughly the same place in both compositions, a little, bowed man running away. In connection with the same painting by Ensor, let us turn to *Snow-Storm: Hannibal and his Army crossing the Alps* (1812, Tate Gallery, London). The upward movement formed by the dark mass below right, Ensor has removed to the left, and the whole thing is once again dominated by an enclosing light. The effect indeed lasts for several years. In 1886 the etching *Christus bedaart de storm* ("Christ calms the storm") appears, which draws recognizably on *Ulysses deriding Polyphemus* (1829, National Gallery, London). But on transferring it from etching to oils in 1891 its relationship with *The Morning of the Deluge* (1843, Tate Gallery, London) is very clearly to be seen.

Adam en Eva uit het Paradijs verdreven ("Adam and Eve driven out of Paradise") (Royal Museum, Antwerp) appeared in 1887. The relationship with Turner's use of colour has already been emphasized often. The foreground with little figures running away is a notion which Turner used repeatedly. But here for the first time there clearly appears a circular motion in the area of light. Ensor has made something unreal of it, but essentially he was not trying to give an abstract representation of the angel Michael with the flaming sword. He speaks of an "étude de lumière". This oscillation in the air appears in not a single painting before 1887. So Ensor came probably very much under the influence of the movement of light in Turner's spaces, and it is very likely that he made other quick sketches which are as yet unknown to us.

There are undoubtedly more points of similarity than can be included in this study. The present exhibition may perhaps contribute to a deeper insight.

L. M. A. Schoonbaert

1 E. Verhaeren, *James Ensor*, Brussels, 1908, p.86
2 G. Le Roy, *James Ensor*, Paris, 1922, p.38
3 P. Desmedt, *James Ensor*, Brussels 1926, p.16

46
Bathing-machine on the beach 1876
Oil on cardboard
9 × 7in / 23 × 18cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

47
Self-portrait 1879
Oil on canvas
15¾ × 13in / 40 × 33cm
Private collection

48
Mystic death of a theologian 1880
Pencil and charcoal
38×32½in / 97×83cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

49
The strike 1880
Pastel
13½×26½in / 34×67·5cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

50
Rue de Flandre in the snow 1880
Oil on canvas
19×11¾in / 48×30cm
L. Franck, London

51
Lady with a fan 1880
Oil on canvas
52½×32½in / 133×83cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

52
Afternoon at Ostend 1881
Oil on canvas
42½×12in / 108×33cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

53
Music, Rue de Flandre 1881
Oil on wood
9½×7½in / 24×19cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

54
Portrait of the artist's father 1881
Oil on canvas
39½×31½in / 100×80cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels

55
Sombre Lady 1881
Oil on canvas
39½×31½in / 100×80cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels

56
Lady in distress 1882
Oil on canvas
39½×31½in / 100×80cm
Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris

57
Portrait of the artist's mother 1882
Oil on canvas
39½×31½in / 100×80cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels

58
Death pursuing the human herd 1882
Pencil
8¾×6¾in / 22·5×17cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

59
Letters to Theo Hannon (4 drawings) 1882
Conté
8¾×7in / 22·5×17·5cm
Private collection

60 *Illustrated page 58*
Scandalized Masks 1883
Oil on canvas
53×44in / 135×112cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels

61 *Illustrated in colour page 59*
Portrait of the painter in a flowered hat 1883
Oil on canvas
29½×24in / 75×61·5cm
Municipal Museum, Ostend

62
The oarsman 1883
Oil on canvas
31×39in / 79×99cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

63
Woman writing 1883
Pencil
8¼×11¾in / 21×30cm
Municipal Museum, Ostend

64
Rooftops 1884
Oil on canvas
61¾×82¼in / 157×209cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

65
Rooftops, Ostend 1885
Oil on canvas
43½×52¾in / 110×134cm
L. Franck, London

66
Lighthouse at Ostend 1885
Oil on canvas
24½×29½in / 62·5×75cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels

67
Sunset 1885
Oil on canvas
45×63½in / 114×161cm
Municipal Museum, Ostend

68
Jesus presented to the people (from the series "Les auréoles du Christ") 1885
Drawing
58½×39½in / 148×100cm
A. Taevernier, Ghent

69
Self-portrait 1885
Pencil
86½×67in / 220×170cm
M. Mabille, Sint-Genesius-Rode

70
Christ mocked 1886
Etching on zinc
94½×63in / 240×160cm
Print-room of the Royal Library Albert I, Brussels

71
The cathedral 1886
Etching on zinc
98½×74¾in / 250×190cm
Print-room of the Royal Library Albert I, Brussels

72
Christ calming the waters 1886
Etching on zinc
63¾×94½in / 162×240cm
Print-room of the Royal Library Albert I, Brussels

73
Boats 1886
Dry-point on zinc
70×93½in / 178×237cm
Print-room of the Royal Library Albert I, Brussels

74
Christ in agony 1886
Charcoal and pencil
24×30in / 61×76cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels

75
Christ in hell 1886
Drawing
6¾×9in / 17·3×22·6cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels

76 *Illustrated page 60*
Girls dressing 1886
Oil on canvas
53×43½in / 135×110cm
Mme C. Jussiant, Antwerp

77
Portrait of E. Rousseau 1887
Dry-point on copper
95×71½in / 241×181cm
Print-room of the Royal Library Albert I, Brussels

78
Brussels, rue du Bon Secours 1887
Dry-point on zinc
51×35in / 130×89cm
Print-room of the Royal Library Albert I, Brussels

79
Pier at Ostend 1887
Dry-point on zinc
50¾×35in / 129×89cm
Print-room of the Royal Library Albert I, Brussels

80
First study for The Entry of Christ into Brussels 1887
Pencil
6¾×9in / 17·5×22·5cm
Private Collection

81
Adam and Eve 1887
Oil on canvas
80¾×96½in / 205×245cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

82
The great basin at Ostend 1888
Engraving on zinc
93×70½in / 236×179cm
Print-room of the Royal Library Albert I, Brussels

83
Woods at Groenendael 1888
Dry-point on copper
46½×31½in / 118×80cm
Print-room of the Royal Library Albert I, Brussels

84
Caesar's Tribute 1888
Dry-point on copper
70½×54¾in / 179×139cm
Print-room of the Royal Library Albert I, Brussels

85
Garden of Love 1888
Etching on copper
45½×35½in / 116×90cm
Print-room of the Royal Library Albert I, Brussels

86
Infamous vivisectors 1888
Dry-point on copper
54½ × 39in / 138 × 99cm
Print-room of the Royal Library Albert I, Brussels

87
Grounded ships 1888
Etching on zinc
93¼ × 70½in / 237 × 179cm
Print-room of the Royal Library Albert I, Brussels

88
Gust of wind at the edge of the wood 1888
Etching on zinc
96½ × 70½in / 245 × 179cm
Print-room of the Royal Library Albert I, Brussels

89
Odd insects 1888
Dry-point on copper
62½ × 46¾in / 159 × 119cm
Print-room of the Royal Library Albert I, Brussels

90
Fantastic musicians 1888
Etching on zinc
94½ × 70¾in / 240 × 180cm
Print-room of the Royal Library Albert I, Brussels

91
Cataclysms 1888
Etching on zinc
93½ × 70in / 238 × 178cm
Print-room of the Royal Library Albert I, Brussels

92
My portrait in 1960 1888
Etching on copper
47 × 27½in / 119 × 70cm
Print-room of the Royal Library Albert I, Brussels

93
Hotel de ville, Oudenaarde 1888
Etching on copper
62½ × 46½in / 159 × 118cm
Print-room of the Royal Library Albert I, Brussels

94
Boulevard Anspach, Brussels 1888
Dry-point on copper
54½ × 35in / 138 × 89cm
Print-room of the Royal Library Albert I, Brussels

95
Combat of demons 1888
Dry-point on copper
114 × 93¼in / 289 × 237cm
Print-room of the Royal Library Albert I, Brussels

96
Fall of the rebellious angels 1888
Oil on canvas
42½ × 52in / 108 × 132cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

97
The Entry of Christ into Brussels 1888
Oil on canvas
101½ × 170in / 258 × 431cm
L. Franck, London

98
Peste dessous, peste dessus, peste partout 1888
Black, blue and white chalk
8½ × 11¾in / 22 × 30cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

99
My portrait as a skeleton 1889
Engraving
47½ × 32in / 121 × 81cm
Print-room of the Royal Library Albert I, Brussels

100
Skaters 1889
Engraving on copper
94½ × 71in / 240 × 180cm
Print-room of the Royal Library Albert I, Brussels

101
Belgium in the XIXth century 1889
Engraving
96 × 70½in / 244 × 179cm
Print-room of the Royal Library Albert I, Brussels

102
The destroying angel 1889
Etching on copper
61¾ × 46½in / 157 × 118cm
Print-room of the Royal Library Albert I, Brussels

103
Country-bridge 1889
Dry-point on copper
47¾ × 31in / 120 × 79cm
Print-room of the Royal Library Albert I, Brussels

104
Kermesse at the windmill 1889
Etching
68 × 52in / 173 × 132cm
Print-room of the Royal Library Albert I, Brussels

105 *Illustrated in colour page 61*
Old woman with masks 1889
Oil on canvas
21½ × 18½in / 54 × 47cm
Museum of Fine Arts, Ghent

106
Portrait of the artist at the easel 1890
Oil on canvas
23½ × 16in / 59·5 × 41cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

107 *Illustrated page 62*
Intrigue 1890
Oil on canvas
35½ × 59in / 90 × 150cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

108
Mirror with skeleton 1890
Drawing
11¾ × 8½in / 30 × 22cm
M. Mabille, Sint-Genesius-Rode

109
Still-life with peaches 1890
Oil on panel
7½ × 9½in / 19 × 24cm
M. Mabille, Sint-Genesius-Rode

110
Astonishment of the mask Wouse 1890
Oil on canvas
43 × 51½in / 109 × 131cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

111
Ensor and General Leman 1890
Oil on wood
4¾ × 6½in / 12 × 16cm
M. Mabille, Sint-Genesius-Rode

112
The miraculous draught of fishes 1891
Etching on copper
81¾ × 71in / 238 × 180cm
Print-room of the Royal Library Albert I, Brussels

113
Ecce Homo 1891
Oil on canvas
6 × 7in / 15 × 18cm
Mme. R. L. M., Brussels

114
Grotesque singers 1891
Oil on canvas
6½ × 8½in / 16 × 21·5cm
M. Mabille, Sint-Genesius-Rode

115
The miracle of the loaves and fishes 1891
Pencil on wood
6¼ × 8½in / 16 × 21cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

116
The cuirassiers at Waterloo 1891
Pencil, coloured chalk and ink
8½ × 25in / 22·5 × 62·5cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

117
Skeletons fighting for the body of a hanged man 1891
Oil on canvas
23½ × 29in / 59 × 74cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

118
Man of sorrows 1891
Oil on canvas
8½ × 6¼in / 21·5 × 16cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

119 *Illustrated page 63*
Strange masks 1892
Oil on canvas
39½ × 31½in / 100 × 80cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels

120
Our Lady of Solace 1892
Panel
18 × 15in / 46 × 38cm
A. Taevernier, Ghent

121
The rout of the mercenaries 1892
Pencil on wood
8½ × 6¾in / 22·5 × 17cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

122
The ray 1892
Oil on canvas
31½ × 39½in / 80 × 100cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels

123
Portrait of Eugène Demolder 1893
Oil on panel
14 × 8¼in / 36 × 21cm
M. Mabille, Sint-Genesius-Róde

124
Fridolin and Gragapanca of Yperdamme 1895
Dry-point
55 × 39¾in / 140 × 101cm
Print-room of the Royal Library Albert I, Brussels

125
The descent of Christ into Hell 1895
Etching
56 × 35½in / 143 × 90cm
Print-room of the Royal Library Albert I, Brussels

126
Battle of the golden spurs 1895
Engraving
110¼ × 96in / 280 × 24cm
Print-room of the Royal Library Albert I, Brussels

127
The bad doctors 1895
Etching
69 × 98½in / 175 × 250cm
Print-room of the Royal Library Albert I, Brussels

128
The dangerous cooks 1896
Panel
15 × 18in / 38 × 46cm
Print-room of the Royal Library Albert I, Brussels

129
Flowers and vegetables 1896
Oil on canvas
31 × 38½in / 79 × 98cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

130
The dangerous cooks 1896
Oil on canvas
10 × 7½in / 25 × 19cm
Mme R. L. M., Brussels

131
The vengeance of Hop Frog 1898
Engraving on copper
142 × 99in / 359 × 251cm
Print-room of the Royal Library Albert I, Brussels

132
The Entry of Christ into Brussels 1898
Dry-point
142 × 98½in / 358 × 249cm
Print-room of the Royal Library Albert I, Brussels

133
Beach at Ostend 1899
Engraving on copper
110 × 88in / 279 × 224cm
Print-room of the Royal Library Albert I, Brussels

134
Portrait of the artist surrounded by masks 1899
Oil on canvas
47¼ × 31½in / 120 × 80cm
Mme C. Jussiant, Antwerp

135
Double portrait 1905
Oil on panel
16 × 13in / 41 × 33cm
M. Mabille, Sint-Genesius-Rode

136
Dance in the woods 1913
Red chalk
11¾ × 18in / 30 × 46cm
Private Collection

137
The tower of Lissewege undated
Oil on canvas
23½ × 29½in / 60 × 75cm
L. Franck, London

138
Nymphs undated
Oil on canvas
12¼ × 16¾in / 31 × 43cm
L. Franck, London

139
Self-portrait undated
Drawing
10¼ × 7¾in / 26 × 20cm
L. Franck, London

140
Copy after Goya undated
Conté
9 × 6¾in / 22·5 × 17cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

141
Copy after Daumier undated
Conté
9 × 6¾in / 22·5 × 17cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

142
Copy after Rembrandt undated
Conté
9 × 6¾in / 22·5 × 17cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

143
Copy after Rowlandson undated
Conté
9×6¾in / 22·5×17cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

144
Copy after Constable undated
Conté
9×6¾in / 22·5×17cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

145
Artist's deceased father undated
Pencil and conté
9×6¾in / 17×22·5cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

146
Portrait of the artist's aunt undated
Conté
11½×8½in / 29×21cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

147
Roman triumph undated
Pencil and coloured chalk on wood
14½×18in / 36·7×45·8cm
Print-room of the Royal Library Albert I, Brussels

148
Lively and radiant Entry of Christ into Jerusalem undated
Charcoal
8×6in / 29·5×15·2cm
Museum of Fine Arts, Ghent

149
Sailing boat (after Turner) undated
Conté
9×6¾in / 22·9×17cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

150
Winds 1888
Engraving
93¾×70½in / 238×179cm
Print-room of the Royal Library Albert I, Brussels

151
Seascape undated
Oil on cardboard
10½×13in / 26×33cm
Mme. R. L. M., Brussels

Henri Evenepoel

Evenepoel, whose work practically all originated in France, at first enjoyed a good deal of admiration through the masterly instruction he received from his teacher G. Moreau. He was scarcely affected by his heavily literary symbolism. The greatest revelation was Manet with his simple composition, the formation of a painting from large dots of colour with a closed contour. The expressive drawing of Toulouse-Lautrec and the large, decorative areas of colour in his posters influenced him similarly. He shared too their preference for the street life of Paris: theatres, parks, bistros and markets. He perceives everything with humanity, without scorn for the simple pleasures, without a sense of tragedy or misery. Evenepoel is also an important portraitist. With sharp psychological insight he painted numerous portraits of Louise, his great love, and of her children, and also of one or two friend s. His composition is quite simple. He does not like the light impressionist touch, but leans towards the interaction of blocks of colour which he sets next to each other, divided by an outline, which distinguishes him from the Nabis.

Algeria inspired him to make a series of oriental paintings. This new departure is the result of the discovery of a completely unknown world. The spots of colour are combined with outlined silhouettes such as Matisse and Spilliaert were to exploit later. Like Ensor and Wouters Evenepoel left innumerable drawings and quick sketches, drawn with feeling and revealing a keen observation of reality. Evenepoel was one of the first painters to photograph himself and then "re-create" the pictures in paint.

Evenepoel undoubtedly belongs to the Flemish tradition by the density of his paint, the joy he has in his colours and the intense gentleness with which he depicts people and objects.

Biography

Painter, draughtsman, etcher.

Born in Nice on 3 October 1872 to Belgian parents. Entrusted to his grandparents in Brussels when his mother died in 1873. The sensitive but physically weak child grows up in an art-loving environment and at an early age is already taking evening classes at the Academy of St-Josse-ten-Noode with the painter E. Blanc-Garin, and then at the Academy of Brussels and in the studio of the decorator A. Crespin. In October 1892 he leaves Brussels for Paris and goes to live with his cousin Louise. For several months he attends the classes in decoration of V. Galland at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, to become a pupil of G. Moreau after Galland's death. With the teaching of Moreau his education is assuredly on the right lines.

In 1894 he settles in a studio in the Avenue de la Motte-Piquet and makes his debut as a poster designer. In this same year he sees about forty of Manet's works at Durand-Ruel's.

For health reasons he goes to spend the winter of 1897 in Blidah and Tipaza in Algeria, which results in a change of style. In 1898 he exhibits for the first time in Belgium, in the Cercle Artistique in Brussels. He considers settling there and marrying his cousin Louise, but dies on 27 December 1899 from typhus, just 27 years old. Among his partially published letters there is a lot of information concerning his art.

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152
Self-portrait 1895
Oil on canvas
32½ × 25in / 82 × 62·5cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels

153
154 *Illustrated in colour page 64*
Pictures - Louis Charles Crespin 1895
Oil on canvas
21½ × 18in / 54·5 × 46cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels

154
The vault of the golden sun 1896
Oil on canvas
29 × 36in / 73·5 × 92cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels

155
Child playing 1896
Oil on canvas
29 × 24in / 73 × 60cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels

156
Little child on the balcony 1896
Oil on canvas
32 × 21½in / 81 × 54cm
Town Hall, Sint-Niklaas

157 *Illustrated page 65*
Woman with white hat 1897
Oil on canvas
22½ × 18in / 57 × 46cm
L. Franck, London

158
Poulterer 1897
Oil on canvas
28 × 36in / 71 × 91cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

159
Greengrocer's wife 1897
Oil on canvas
33½ × 15¾in / 85 × 40cm
Private Collection

160
Milcendeau painting Henriette 1897
Oil on cardboard
9 × 20½in / 23 × 52cm
M. Mabille, Sint-Genesius-Rode

161
Hofbaner in uniform 1897
Oil on canvas
39½ × 14½in / 100 × 37cm
Town Hall, Sint-Niklaas

162
Negro-dance in Blidah 1898
Oil on canvas
27½ × 39½in / 70 × 100cm
Private Collection

163
Women at the Narghile 1898
Oil on canvas
13 × 16½in / 33 × 41cm
Private Collection

164
Charles in a striped sweater 1898
Oil on canvas
16½ × 19½in / 42 × 50cm
Private Collection

165
Charles in a putty-coloured coat 1898
Oil on canvas
31 × 42in / 79 × 107cm
Mme J. Speth, Antwerp

166
Feasting invalids 1898
Oil on canvas
31½ × 47in / 80 × 120cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels

167
Spaniard in Paris 1899
Oil on canvas
84½ × 98in / 215 × 250cm
Museum of Fine Arts, Ghent

168
Bed 1899
Oil on canvas
13 × 16½in / 33 × 41cm
A. Taevernier, Ghent

169
Walk in St Cloud on Sunday morning 1899
Oil on canvas
74½ × 118in / 190 × 300cm
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Liège

170
Picnic undated
Oil on canvas
32 × 21in / 81 × 54cm
Town Hall, Sint-Niklaas

171 *Illustrated page* 66
Sunday in the Bois de Boulogne undated
Oil on canvas
34 × 23½in / 86 × 60cm
Municipal Credit of Belgium, Brussels

Constant Permeke

Monumental seascapes and landscapes, massively square people, these are Permeke's subjects; primitive, supremely healthy vitality is their basic quality.

In Sint-Martens-Latem, around 1909, he became acquainted with the expressive, dusky brown-green spectrum and rudimentary shapes of A. Servaes. According to a report by G. De Smet, German expressionism from before 1914 was already known to the artists' colony of Latem. In England, Permeke lived in poverty among the farmers of Devonshire. He experienced the same life of nature as these simple toilers. He painted *De Vreemdeling* (1916) in which all the signs of his later expressionism are present: monumental silhouettes, simplified and deformed for the sake of a stronger expression, a threatening range of earthy browns, a strong psychical tension, no tales. This deformation never destroys the real objects. This strong bond with reality remains the great strength of Flemish painting.

Permeke, who like G. De Smet and Fritz Van den Berghe participated in Sélection, was never influenced, as his friends were, by the worldly Brussels milieu. He paints landscapes and people with warm ochres, reds and earthy browns. Soon his mighty figures appear, which are imposing by virtue of their undiluted bigness. They are colossi who recall Rubens and Jordaens. There is an extraordinarily strong relationship from man to man, from man to natural phenomenon in these large bodies, sealed off with sharp outlines, but tone for tone tied to the background. In this monochrome period the most vivid works are produced – a synthesis of everything life contains in the way of fruitfulness, toil, compassion and plain happiness. The wild force of disproportionate figures is held in check by the monochrome colour and the outline which keeps everything together, the cosmic heaving of the landscapes and seascapes is controlled by explicit force lines. The drama is always there in man and nature, but it never erupts as in the works of the "mad" Van Gogh, or the tormented German expressionists.

Around 1935 Permeke is looking, in his landscapes as well as in his large nudes, for greater serenity. Animism reigned supreme in Flanders. Permeke stays closer to Nature as it is, and avoids disfigurations. The warmly glowing colours attest to a real vitality, but there is more atmosphere, more tenderness, as is also to be seen in the carved female nudes.

Permeke was indisputably the most important of the Flemish expressionists. He can express his cosmic sensitivity for life, related to Van Gogh's, in all its greatness with his enormous technical capacities. And so it is not surprising that for a generation he dominated post-expressionism in Flanders.

Biography

Painter, etcher, draughtsman, sculptor.

Born in Antwerp on 3 July 1886, son of an artist. He attended the Academies at Bruges and Ghent where he received instruction from J. Delvin. In 1909 he settled in Sint-Martens-Latem with Gust De Smet, Fritz Van den Berghe and Albert Servaes. He started producing impressionist work. After his marriage he settled in Ostend from 1912 to 1914. In 1914 he was evacuated, badly wounded as a soldier, to England. Released from the clinic at Bownay he settled successively in Chardstock, Sidmouth and Sidford in Devon. From impressionism he evolved into an expressionist.

In 1919 he returns to Belgium and lives first in Antwerp, and then in Ostend, where he paints mostly seascapes, harbour views and fishermen.

In 1925 he builds the house "De Vier Windstreken" ("The Four Corners of the Earth"), now the Permeke Museum at Jabbeke. He paints mostly landscapes and farmers.

He begins work as a sculptor in 1936.

1935–45 is the period of the great nudes. A trip to Britanny in 1951 brings about a definite change in his work. He dies in Ostend on 4 January 1952.

The first important retrospective took place in Brussels in 1930. Permeke was a member of Sélection, l'Art Vivant, and Kunst van Heden.

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172
Cider drinker 1917
Oil on canvas
50×40in / 127×102cm
Private Collection, Basle

173
Harvest landscape in Devonshire 1917
Oil on panel
48×69in / 121·5×176cm
Groeninge Museum, Bruges

174
Fisher folk 1919
Pen and ink
9×12½in / 22×31·5cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

175 *Illustrated in colour page 67*
Pretty girl 1920
Oil on wood
39½×48in / 100×124cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

176
Seascape 1921
Oil on canvas
39½×47½in / 101×121cm
P. Jespers, Tervuren

177 *Illustrated page 68*
Nude 1921
Oil on paper
57½×37½in / 146×96cm
M. Naessens, Meise

178
Toiler 1921
Charcoal
59×39½in / 150×100
M. Debra, Veurne

179
Country fair 1921
Oil on canvas
30¾×43½in / 78×110·5cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

180 *Illustrated in colour page 69*
"Over Permeke" 1922
Oil on canvas
59×77in / 150×195cm
Permeke Museum, Jabbeke

181
Pastry-stand 1922
Oil on canvas
52×59in / 130×150cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

182 *Illustrated page 70*
Black bread 1923
50×59in / 127×150cm
G. Vanderhaegen, St.-Amandsberg

183
The Fiancés 1923
Oil on canvas
59½×51in / 151×129·5cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels

184
Pregnancy 1924
Drawing
47×33½in / 120×85cm
L. Bogaerts

185
Praying woman 1925
Oil on panel
65×50in / 165×128cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

186
Basket-carrier 1925
Oil on panel
64×49in / 162×125cm
Municipal Museum, Ostend

187
Fishing boat 1926
Drawing
19½×24in / 50×62cm
Private Collection

188
Whistler 1927
Oil on canvas
54×43in / 135×110cm
E. Le Ghait

189
Toone 1928
Drawing
30¼×22in / 77×56cm
E. Veranneman

190
Peasant and his wife 1928
Oil on canvas
71×66in / 180×166cm
L. Bogaerts

191
The little sow 1928
Oil on canvas
40×48in / 100×122cm
L. Bogaerts

192
Farmer's family with cat 1928
Oil on canvas
65×72in / 166×181cm
Groeninge Museum, Bruges

193
Seated peasant 1928
Drawing
24×15in / 62×39cm
P. Jespers, Tervuren

194 *Illustrated page 71*
The big sow 1929
Oil on canvas
64½×72in / 168×181cm
L. Bogaerts

195
Motherhood 1929
Oil on canvas with charcoal
71×35in / 180×90cm
Municipal Museum, Ostend

196
The beggar 1931
Collage – paper on cardboard
70½×47in / 178×119cm
Permeke Museum, Jabbeke

197
The cesspit 1933
Oil on canvas
49×69in / 125×175cm
Mme T. Herbert, Courtrai

198
Harvest 1934
Oil on canvas
52×60½in / 132×154cm
L. Bogaerts

199
Green sea 1935
Oil on canvas
49×68in / 123×173cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

200
Potato-eater 1935
Oil on canvas
43¾×53½in / 111×136cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels

201 *Illustrated page 72*
Marie-Lou 1935–36
Bronze
105×42½×30¾in / 267×108×77cm
Middelheim Open-air museum of sculpture, Antwerp

202
Self-portrait 1936
Wood
31½in / 80cm
Permeke Museum, Jabbeke

203
Large reclining nude 1941
Oil and charcoal on paper pasted on wood
46½×76¾in / 117·5×195cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

204
Nude (to Marieke) 1944
Charcoal
60×36in / 152×93cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

205
Winter landscape 1945
Oil on canvas
38×59in / 97×150cm
A. Taevernier, Ghent

206
Parting 1948
Oil on canvas
65×71in / 165×180cm
Permeke Museum, Jabbeke

207 *Illustrated page 73*
Beach in Brittany 1951
Oil on canvas
57×69in / 145×175cm
Permeke Museum, Jabbeke

208
Coffee-drinkers undated
Oil on panel
57½×46½in / 146×118cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

209
Snow landscape undated
Oil on canvas
48×68in / 122×172cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

210
Niobe undated
Reconstituted stone
Length, 118in / 300cm
Bank of Paris and the Netherlands, Belgium

211
Nude undated
Parchment
67×34in / 170×80cm
Mr and Mrs E. Veranneman

212
Standing nude seen from behind undated
Drawing
57½×33½in / 146×84cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels

213
Standing nude undated
Drawing
13×11½in / 33×29cm
Private Collection

214
Golden landscape undated
Oil on canvas
39½×51in / 100×130cm
D'Hondt-Dhaenens Foundation, Deurle-on-Lys

215
Man with jacket undated
Oil on canvas
68½×56½in / 174×149cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

216
The procession undated
Ink
18½×22½in / 47·2×51·6cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

217
The church at Jabbeke under snow undated
Oil on canvas
24×36in / 61×90cm
E. Bastaens, Berchem-Antwerp

Léon Spilliaert

Born in Ostend, town of Ensor, he would appear to have been completely uninfluenced in his work by this fact.

The sea, the shore and man, especially woman inspired Spilliaert, and later, trees. There is in his work a striking hallucinatory quiet, the result of a strong psychic concentration. Man and nature are absorbed in a rarefied timelessness.

Spilliaert goes through a short symbolic period and keeps in his later works a number of notable elements from this style: broad surfaces, rhythmically waving lines and a predilection for dull materials. His will-o'-the-wisp figures in pale garb remind us of the solemnly processing symbolic figures of Maurice Denis during the eighteen-nineties. Art Nouveau depends in good part on graceful arabesques. The nobly refined Spilliaert expresses himself in this style as if it were a matter of course. Just as important are the refined harmonies of his colour, undiluted colour and pastels being set next to each other. In this Spilliaert is, again, close to the French Nabis.

At the time when impressionism held sway in Flemish painting he introduced a particularly expressive hidden rage into his portraits and landscapes, evidently under the influence of Munch.

Expressionists and surrealists profited from the synthesis of forms and the unreal, hallucinatory world of Spilliaert, who remained a lone figure.

Biography

Painter, draughtsman, principally water-colourist.

Born in Ostend on 28 July 1881, son of a perfume dealer. After college he helped in the business, though he had been drawing since his childhood. He was self-taught, free of dominant artistic fashion. He made his debut when E. Verhaeren introduced him at the "Salon du Printemps" in 1900. After his marriage (1916) he settled in Berchem-Sainte-Agathe near Brussels, where city parks and landscapes temporarily replaced sea-views.

In 1921 he returned once more to Ostend, only to return permanently to Brussels in 1935, where he died on 23 November 1946.

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Spilliaert, Palais des Beaux-Arts, Charleroi, 1961 (exhibition catalogue)

218
Woman with veil 1903
Wash drawing
14½ × 8½in / 37 × 22cm
Municipal Museum, Ostend

219
Pink hat 1904
Water-colour and pastel
20 × 16in / 51 × 41cm
Municipal Museum, Ostend

220 *Illustrated page 74*
Gust of wind 1904
Water-colour and gouache
20 × 16in / 51 × 41cm
Municipal Museum, Ostend

221
Parlour 1904
Water-colour and pastel
18½ × 18½in / 47·5 × 47·5cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels

222
Interior with green plant 1907
Water-colour and pastel
19½ × 22in / 50 × 56cm
Municipal Museum, Ostend

223
Returning from the bath 1907
Water-colour
19½ × 24in / 50 × 62cm
Johan A. H. van Rossum

224
Profile 1907
Coloured chalk and Indian ink
20½ × 15in / 52 × 38cm
Mme L. Spilliaert

225
Along the quay 1907
Coloured chalk and Indian ink
35½ × 28½in / 90 × 72cm
Mme L. Spilliaert

226
Self-portrait with mirror 1908
Water-colour and pastel
19 × 25in / 48 × 63cm
Municipal Museum, Ostend

227
Expression 1908
Oil on canvas
20½ × 16½in / 52 × 42cm
F. Vandenbroucke, Heverlee

228
Self-portrait 1908
Coloured chalk
11 × 9in / 28 × 23cm
Professor and Mrs R. A. d'Hulst, Dilbeek

229
Widow 1908
Coloured chalk and Indian ink
20½ × 16½in / 52 × 42
Mme L. Spilliaert

230
Girls on the beach 1908
Gouache and Indian ink
25 × 19in / 65 × 48cm
E. Haeberli, Brussels

231
The water-cart 1909
Water-colour and pencil
25 × 19in / 64 × 48·5cm
Groeninge Museum, Bruges

232
Thermal baths at Ostend with figures 1909
Coloured chalk and water-colour
14½ × 10in / 36 × 25cm
R. L. Hayne, London

233
Bottles 1909
Wash
19 × 25in / 49 × 64cm
Mme L. Spilliaert

234
Sea-bank 1909
Coloured chalk and Indian ink
39½ × 29½in / 100 × 74cm
Mme L. Spilliaert

235
Girl bathing 1910
Coloured chalk and Indian ink
25 × 20in / 65 × 50cm
Mme L. Spilliaert

236
Girl bathing 1910
Wash
15 × 24in / 38·5 × 62cm
Johan A. H. van Rossum

237 *Illustrated page 75*
Girl bathing 1910
Water-colour
25 × 23in / 63·5 × 58·3cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels

238
Lighthouse 1910
Water-colour and pastel
21×29in / 54×74cm
Municipal Museum, Ostend

239 *Illustrated in colour page 76*
Girls with white stockings 1912
Gouache
25×17in / 63×43cm
Municipal Museum, Ostend

240
Fisherwoman 1912
Pastel and gouache
34½×27½in / 88×70cm
Municipal Museum, Ostend

241
October evening 1912
Coloured chalk
27½×35in / 72×89cm
Mme L. Spilliaert

242
White clothes 1912
Gouache
35½×27½in / 90×70cm
Municipal Museum, Ostend

243
Lady in exhibition 1917
Gouache and chalk
26¾×20in / 68×51cm
Mme L. Spilliaert

244
Tall trees 1921
Water-colour
30×21½in / 76×55cm
Private Collection

245
Homage to Virgil 1942
Water-colour and Indian ink
15½×22½in / 39×57cm
Mme L. Spilliaert

246
Winter-music 1943
Indian ink and water-colour
18½×24in / 47×61
R. L. Hayne, London

247 *Illustrated page 77*
Trees 1945
Water-colour and Indian ink
24×17½in / 61×44cm
Professor and Mrs R. A. d'Hulst, Dilbeek

248
Open door 1945
Water-colour and Indian ink
24×15½in / 61×40cm
Mme L. Spilliaert

249
Lady with muff at the exhibition undated
Coloured chalk
23½×16in / 59×41cm
E. Hanberli, Brussels

Edgard Tytgat

To begin with he painted very sensitive impressionist portraits, landscapes and interiors where a window acts, to use his own words "as respiration and inspiration". Around 1907 Tytgat, with his friend R. Wouters, looked for a more synthetic composition. They were not satisfied with the dissolving effect of impressionism. The fact that from 1914 to 1918 Tytgat had to earn his living in London by producing book illustrations strengthened the feeling for synthesis. The subjects which he treated after the war varied little from those of the Latem expressionists: circus and concert-artists, fair-tents, Sunday strolls, and all the variations on the theme of the loving couple. With growing years the storyteller pushes himself to the foreground. In a free hand Tytgat writes his spiritual tale with careful guilelessness on a velvety washed base of water-colour in very refined harmonious colours. His preference is for happenings from everyday life and childishly naive female nudes which he relates to ritual human sacrifices in old Arabian legends, from mythology or from his own imagination. He often adds text to increase clarity. Worth noting is the simultaneous depiction of different happenings on the same picture, as was common in the middle ages and in folk art. Tytgat called himself "l'imagier de Watermael", because he was frequently inspired by popular prints of the 18th and 19th centuries.

In the ensemble of Flemish expressionists Tytgat is essentially the narrative artist who founded no school.

Biography

Painter, etcher, wood-carver, lithographer and carpet designer, born in Brussels on 28 April 1879. He spent his early years in Bruges and moved back to the capital in 1888. In 1893 he was apprenticed to a clockmaker; from 1895 he worked in his father's lithography works, becoming a pupil of C. Montale at the Brussels Academy in 1900.

In 1905 he married Maria de Mesmaeker, "Maya", who often posed for him, and settled in Auderghem near Brussels, moving to Watermael-Boitsfort, where Rik Wouters also lived, in 1907.

During the first World War he stayed in London where he worked as a book illustrator and printed a memorial volume for the late Rik Wouters. He cut the prints and the text himself.

In 1920 he returned to Brussels, lived for a short time in Forest, became artistic director of a wallpaper factory in Nivelles and in 1923 went to live permanently in Woluew-St-Lambert, where he died on 11 January 1957.

The first big retrospective of his work took place in the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels in 1931.

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Edgard Tytgat, Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, 1951 (exhibition catalogue, introduction by E. Langui)

250
Interior at Watermael 1914
Oil on canvas
33½ × 42½in / 85 × 108cm
Dr J. Hoet, Ghent

251
Maypole, Chelsea 1915
Water-colour
10 × 14in / 25 × 36cm
Private Collection, Brussels

252
Fair-booth, Chelsea 1916
Water-colour
10 × 14in / 25 × 35cm
Private Collection, Brussels

253
Odd shop 1919
Water-colour
10 × 14in / 25 × 35cm
Property of the Belgian State

254
Knight Tytgat 1921
Oil on canvas
25½ × 21½in / 65 × 55cm
L. Bogaerts

255
Portrait of the artist's wife 1922
Oil on canvas
25½ × 21½in / 65 × 55cm
Museum Boymans-Van Beuningen, Rotterdam

256
Listening to Jocelyn's lullaby 1923
Oil on canvas
25½ × 27½in / 65 × 70cm
Private Collection, Brussels

257
Tragic old men 1924
Oil on canvas
32 × 27½in / 81 × 100cm
Mme T. Herbert, Courtrai

258 *Illustrated page 78*
Under the charm of the flute 1925
Oil on canvas
24 × 19½in / 61 × 50cm
M. M. Stal, Brussels

259
Circus in Flanders 1925
Oil on canvas
25½ × 23in / 65 × 58cm
M. Mabille, Sint-Genesius-Rode

260 *Illustrated in colour page 79*
Inspiration 1926
Water-colour
19½ × 27½in / 50 × 70cm
Mme T. Herbert, Courtrai

261
The fortune of the caravan 1926
Oil on canvas
32 × 39½in / 81 × 100cm
G. J. Nellens, Casino, Knokke

262
Recollection of a Sunday 1926
Oil on canvas
35 × 45½in / 89 × 116cm
D'Hondt-Dhaenens Foundation, Deurle-on-Lys

263
Oriental tale 1927
Oil on canvas
35 × 45½in / 89 × 116cm
Mme T. Herbert, Courtrai

264
The conquered maiden and the handsome singer 1927
Oil on canvas
29½ × 36in / 75 × 92cm
Private Collection, Brussels

265
Spring 1928
Oil on canvas
32×25½in / 81×65cm
Private Collection, Ghent

266
Young woman in blue 1932
Oil on canvas
32×25½in / 81×65cm
M. Tytgat

267
Girl with green bolero 1932
Oil on canvas
45½×33in / 116×89cm
Museum Boymans-Van Beuningen, Rotterdam

268
Loa-Loa (Basque song) 1938
Oil on canvas
39½×32in / 100×81cm
Mme T. Herbert, Courtrai

269
Secret love 1938
Oil on canvas
35×45in / 88×115cm
G. Daelemans, Brussels

270
Bed-sittingroom 1942
Oil on canvas
29×36in / 73×92cm
E. Haeberli, Brussels

271
Dahlias 1944
Oil on canvas
32×19½in / 80×50cm
G. Daelemans, Brussels

272
Snow at Wolvwe 1945
Oil on canvas
29½×24in / 76×60cm
M. Naessens, Meise

273
Scenes from an artist's life 1946
Oil on canvas
45½×35in / 116×89cm
Mme T. Herbert, Courtrai

274
Hallucinated pianist 1947
Oil on canvas
32×39½in / 81×100cm
Private Collection

275
Six princesses 1949
Oil on canvas
35×41½in / 89×106cm
Property of the Belgian State

276
Capture of Troy 1950
Wash
19½×26in / 50×66cm
E. Langui

277 *Illustrated page 80*
The last journey of a proud noblewoman 1951
Water-colour
19½×26in / 49×66cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

278
Diana and the three huntresses 1952
Oil on canvas
38×51in / 97×130cm
Mme L. Haesaerts, Brussels

279
She leaves the world as a victim 1952
Wash
19½×26in / 50×66cm
P. Jespers, Tervuren

280
The devilish hunter 1952
Oil on canvas
37½×39½in / 95×100cm
G. Daelemans, Brussels

281
Une page d'une nuit de songe d'une novice et de ses deux servantes 1954
Oil on canvas
35×45½in / 89×116cm
M. Naessens, Meise

Frits Van Den Berghe

He started off as a luminist impressionist with portraits, interiors and landscapes. During his exile in Holland he came under the influence of the "fauve" colouring of Sluters, the sombre coloured cubist expressionism of Le Fauconnier and the drama of German expressionism. He

made a first synthesis which resulted in an extreme expressionism marked by a brutal deformation, obtrusive diagonals, a savage composition, and enormous and prinitive vitality. His major interest was for landscapes and peasants.

After he had returned to Belgium his shapes became less biting. His themes remained the same as those of Gust De Smet, but he was more deeply influenced by his contact with the Brussels milieu, with Selection and Le Centaure. His colouring became steadily more refined, his outlines and his paint thinner. Around 1926 Van den Berghe slowly begins to change his human figure to a monstrous, unreal creature, as an expression of his fear and obsession. From 1927 to 1931 like G. De Smet and E. Tytgat, he makes a contract with Le Centaure. It is a fruitful period for the man who has not grown up to face the material worries of everyday life. The years 1928–30 form the climax of his career. More intellectual than his friends from the second Latem group – Permeke and De Smet – he applies himself to the secret basis of life which lurks behind perceptible reality. He seeks to penetrate the invisible world. Mineralogy always fascinated him and the Freudian world of the subconscious which was causing a furore in Europe. Van den Berghe's surrealism is of quite a different kind from Spilliaert's and from the later surrealism of Magritte and Delvaux.

Ignored for a very long time, Frits Van den Berghe is one of the outstanding figures of Flemish expressionism. Just as Brusselmans is a transitional figure in abstract art, he is a transitional figure in surrealism.

Biography

Painter, draughtsman, engraver, illustrator, born in Ghent on 3 April 1883. His father was the secretary of the University Library, and the young Frits shared his interest in the intellectual life of the time. From 1897 to 1904 he was a pupil of Biesbroeck and Delvin at the Ghent Academy, where A. Servaes joined him for a time. On the advice of A. Dessenis he spent a short time in April 1902 at Sint-Martens-Latem, a hamlet on the Leie, then still very rustic in character. From 1904 to 1913 he stayed there continually, participating in a group of artists which were called the second Latem group, and to which also belonged A. Servaes, Gust and Léon De Smet and Permeke. From 1907 to 1911 he is professor at the Ghent Academy. In 1914 he leaves Sint-Martens-Latem for America. Six months later he returns, disillusioned, to Belgium, and then has to flee the war. In Holland he meets his friend Gust De Smet in Amsterdam. Together they move successively to Blaricum and Laren. He breaks with impressionism. In 1922 the two friends stay with Permeke at Ostend and then move on to Bachte-Maria-Leerne and Afsnee near Latem. In 1925 Van den Berghe settles permanently in Ghent. In 1929 until 1939, after the failure of Le Centaure, he was engaged as a draughtsman by the Ghent newspaper *Vooruit*.

He died on 23 September 1939.

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282
Pedlars 1920
Distemper on canvas
28½ × 30⅝in / 72 × 78cm
Dr M. Mullier-Scharpé, Louvain

283
Malpertuis 1920
Oil on canvas
43½ × 52in / 110 × 131·5cm
Private Collection

284
Portrait of Mrs Brulez 1920
Oil on canvas
33 × 25½in / 84 × 65cm
J. Janssens, Lier

285 *Illustrated page 81*
The good inn 1924
Oil on canvas
60 × 45½in / 152 × 116cm
M. Naessens, Meise

286
The eternal vagabond 1925
Oil on canvas
63 × 47⅜in / 160 × 120cm
Municipal Museum, Ostend

287
The prisoner 1927
Oil on canvas
39¾ × 32½in / 101 × 82cm
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Liège

288
Waiting upon a beauty 1928
Collage on panel
18 × 13½in / 46 × 34cm
J. Janssens, Lier

289 *Illustrated in colour page 82*
The singing statue 1928
Oil on canvas
57½ × 45½in / 146·5 × 115·5cm
Museum of Fine Arts, Ghent

290
The beautiful wedding 1928
25 × 30½in / 63 × 77cm
Private Collection

291
The realm of nature 1928–29
Oil on paper
20 × 26in / 51 × 65·5cm
Groeninge Museum, Bruges

292 *Illustrated page 83*
The domain of love 1929
Oil on canvas
46½ × 36in / 118·5 × 92cm
Private Collection, Ghent

293
The unknown temple 1929
Oil on canvas
39¾ × 32½in / 101 × 82cm
M. Naessens, Meise

294
Idols 1929
Pasted paper
19½ × 14½in / 50·5 × 37cm
Groeninge Museum, Bruges

295
Genealogy 1929
Oil on canvas
57½ × 45in / 146 × 114cm
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Basle

296
Tree in blossom 1930
Oil on canvas
57½ × 45½in / 146 × 115cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

297
The swing 1930
Oil on canvas
28½ × 26in / 72 × 66cm
Private Collection

298
Sunken road 1931
Oil on canvas
28½ × 34½in / 73 × 88cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels

299
Comrades 1932
Oil on canvas
23½ × 19in / 60 × 48cm
J. Janssens, Lier

300
Self-portrait 1932–33
Oil on canvas
26 × 21in / 66 × 53cm
Private Collection, Ghent

301
Fall of the saints 1933
Oil on canvas
59 × 47¼in / 150 × 120cm
Museum of Fine Arts, Ghent

302
Three figures 1934–35
Collage
26 × 18in / 66·5 × 45·5cm
J. M. Mees, De Pinte

303
Dancing angels 1936–37
Collage
20 × 27in / 50·5 × 69cm
Private Collection

304
Self-portrait with skull 1938
Oil on canvas
28½ × 32in / 73 × 80cm
A. E. Herdener

305
Choral undated
Oil on canvas
55 × 47¼in / 140 × 120cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels

Rik Wouters

In Flemish art perhaps nobody has mastered life and love in the same exuberant manner as the sculptor and painter Rik Wouters. Like Evenepoel he had one woman, Nel, who was his only model. He immortalized her in bronze while she mimed, enjoyed the sun, had household worries or danced in grandiose sensuality in an outburst of energy. *Het zotte geweld* (*The wild dance*, 1912), a masterly portrayal of a fleeting moment, impressionistically instantaneous, was followed by *Huiselijke zorgen* (*Domestic cares*, 1913), a synthesis of introversion, a monumental work of art. The early paintings are in the style of Ensor. He is trying to capture the vibration of light in quickly applied colours using a palette knife. Around 1910 he chooses a brush rather than a palette knife. 1912 is a decisive year. In Paris he discovers Cézanne. Wouters paints his coloured fairy-stories in broad transparent strokes: flowers, still lifes with white table cloths, sunny interiors in which the light, reflected by mirrors, streams onto his beloved model.

Present everywhere is a joy in intense physicality. Around 1913 the landscape bathed in sunshine comes more to the fore, often seen from an open window. Everything his brush touches sparkles with joy and vivaciousness. The white base of the canvas, which he leaves partially unpainted heightens the glow of the red which dominates. In his Dutch period the red is less intense owing to the intrusive proximity of blues which eventually gain supremacy. His brushstrokes become large blobs, as in the *Self-portrait with black-eye-patch* (1915).

Although he died at an early age, Wouters is nonetheless the most remarkable figure of Brabantine fauvism.

Biography

Painter, water-colourist, sculptor, etcher, draughtsman.

Born in Malines, a centre of the furniture industry, on 2 August 1882. He learns the trade of woodcutter in his father's workshop and takes lessons in modelling from Theo Blickx. In the evenings he goes to draw at the Malines Academy. In 1901 he enters the class of sculptor Ch. Van der Stappen in Brussels.

He settles with Nel Wouters in Watermael in 1904, marries in 1905, moves to Boitsfort in 1907. Between 1907 and 1914 a whole series of bronzes are finished.

In 1907 he begins, as a self-taught man, to paint, which from 1908 becomes his principal occupation. Nel poses for sculptures as well as for paintings. He has also immortalized her in a number of rapid sketches, made mostly with a brush. They show a great directness in capturing the most spontaneous movements and feeling of life. He also frequently paints animals and landscapes.

An important showing in the Galerie Giroux in Brussels in 1912 gives him the chance to visit Paris the same year and to become acquainted with the work of Rodin, Renoir, Degas, Cézanne. A contract with the Galerie Giroux, which pays for all the requisites of painter, draughtsman and sculptor, releases him from material worries for a time.

In August 1914 Wouters is mobilized. Life without Nel is impossible. He deserts and is interned at Zeist, Amersfoort and Amsterdam. Friends try to alleviate his situation and see to it that he can draw and paint. Some important works are the result, rather more melancholy in character. Wouters is operated on for a cancer of the eye and dies blind on 11 July 1916.

The first important retrospective of his work took place in Brussels in 1935 in the Palais des Beaux-Arts; the Koninklijk Museum in Antwerp exhibited a large collection in 1957, Malines in 1966.

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Het leven van Rik Wouters doorheen zijn werk, A. Manteau n.v., Brussels, 1944

A. J. J. Delen, *Rik Wouters* (Monographs on Belgian Art), De Sikkel, Antwerp, 1948

R. Avermaete, *Rik Wouters*, Arcade, Brussels, 1962 (catalogue of his work)

Rik Wouters, Cercle Aristique et Littéraire de Charleroi, XXIst show, Charleroi, 1947 (exhibition catalogue, introduction by E. Langui)

Rik Wouters, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp, 1957 (exhibition catalogue, introduction by W. Vanbeselaere)

Rik Wouters, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris, 1957 (exhibition catalogue)

Retrospective Exhibition Rik Wouters, Malines, 1966 (exhibition catalogue, introduction by R. Avermaete, P. Haesaerts, L. Lebeer, W. Vanbeselaere)

306
Etching-table, 1908
Oil on canvas
34 × 37in / 86 × 94cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

307
Contemplation 1911
Bronze
H. 17½in / 44cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

308
In the sun 1911
Bronze
H. 24½in / 62·5cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels

309 *Illustrated page 84*
Wild dance 1912
Bronze
H. 97in / 244cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

310
Sick woman with white shawl 1912
Oil on canvas
33½ × 28½in / 84·5 × 72cm
Mme P. Cattier, Brussels

311
The artist's wife 1912
Oil on canvas
50½ × 41½in / 128 × 105cm
Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris

312
Homage to Cézanne 1912
Oil on canvas
49½ × 43½in / 125 × 110cm
Private Collection

313 *Illustrated page 85*
Woman in blue with amber necklace 1912
Oil on canvas
48 × 43½in / 121·5 × 110cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels

314
Upbringing 1912
Oil on canvas
42 × 48½in / 107 × 123cm
Private Collection

315 *Illustrated in colour page 86*
Birthday flowers 1912
Oil on canvas
38 × 43in / 91 × 109cm
Mme C. Jussiant, Antwerp

316
Woman ironing 1912
Oil on canvas
42 × 48½in / 107 × 123cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

317
Red curtains 1913
Oil on canvas
39½ × 32in / 100 × 81cm
P. Vermeylen, Sint-Genesius-Rode

318
Dish with apples 1913
Oil on canvas
25½ × 32in / 65 × 81cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels

319
Flute-player 1914
Oil on canvas
52¾ × 45½in / 134 × 116cm
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels

320
Peaches 1914
Oil on canvas
51 × 49½in / 130 × 125cm
D. M. Van Buuren

321
Woman in blue 1914
Oil on canvas
38½ × 43in / 90 × 109cm
M. Naessens, Meise

322
Chiropody 1915
Water-colour
22 × 30in / 56 × 76cm
Private Collection, Brussels

323
Leaning woman: Evening mood 1915
Oil on canvas
37½ × 28¾in / 95 × 73cm
Museum of Fine Arts, Ghent

324
Woman at the window 1915
Gouache
19 × 23½in / 48 × 59cm
Private Collection, Brussels

325
Bosvoorde undated
Oil on canvas
42½ × 48½in / 108 × 123cm
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp

326
Man with straw-hat undated
Oil on canvas
47½ × 43½in / 120 × 111cm
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Liège

327
Still-life with cauliflower and salad-bowl undated
Oil on canvas
32 × 39½in / 80 × 100cm
J. Grimar, Brussels

328
Last self-portrait undated
Oil on canvas
29½ × 24½in / 67·4 × 62·4cm
L. Franck, London

J Brusselmans

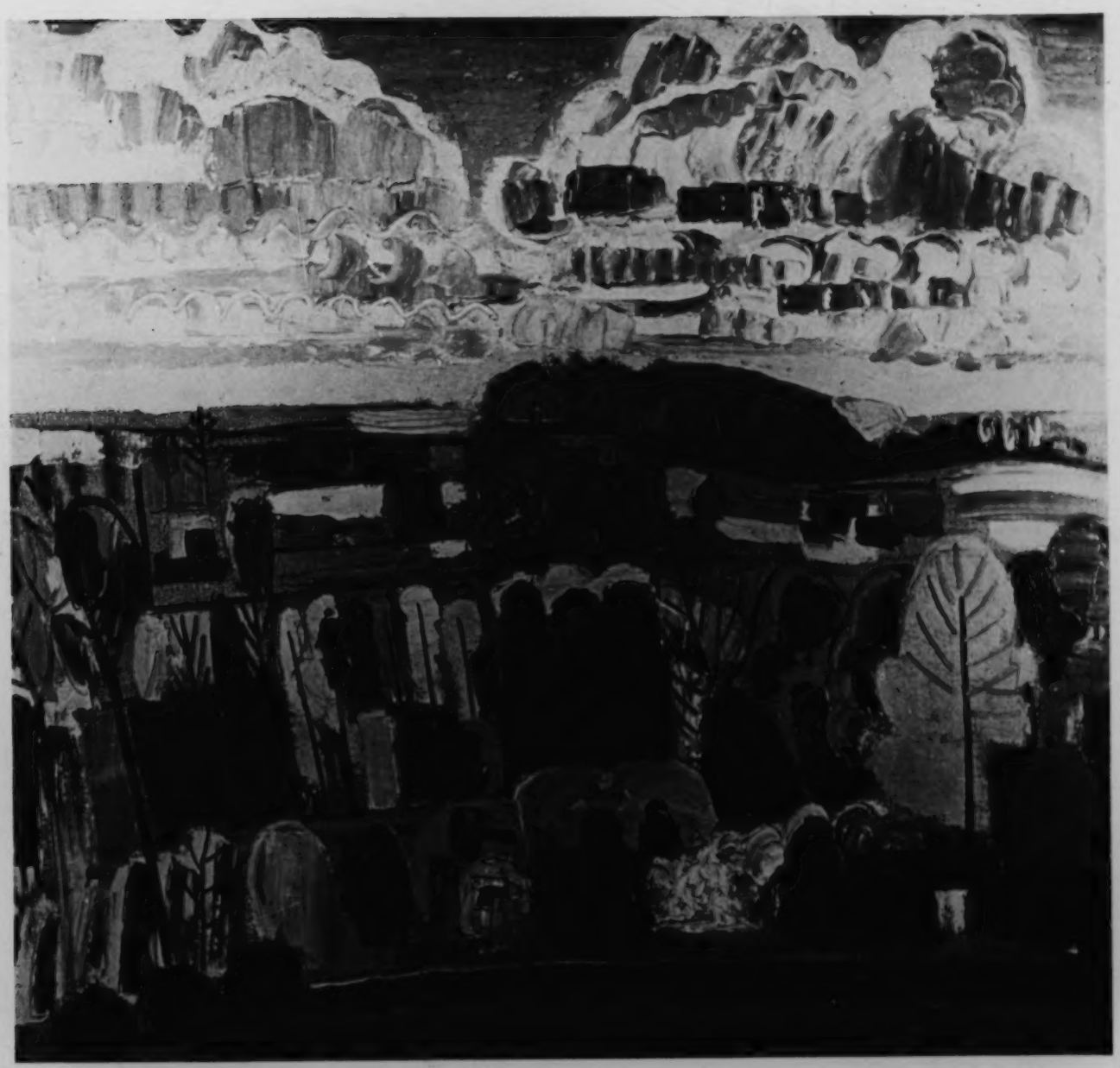
8
Harvest 1934

Writing about Brusselman's painting P. Haesaerts quotes Braque's phrase "I like the rule that purifies emotion". This is the way Brusselmans views the harvest. The sun which parches the sky, accentuates the blue colour of the clouds, and shimmers back off the earth. Between them lie the golden fields, stacked with sheaves, in which the peasants are only of secondary importance. Permeke glorified, in lyrical terms, the fertility of the earth; Brusselmans in his paintings tries to make more solid, concrete creations.

J Brusselmans

17
'Pajotten' Country 1938

In '*Pajotten' Country* he has attempted a synthesis of the Brabant landscape. He evokes in this work the freshness of spring – one reason, probably, for the less rigid structure of this work and the distinctly lyrical feeling it contains.



J Brusselmans

20
Golden Seascape 1939

The glow of the setting sun gilds both water and air and Brusselmans has rendered it with short, constructive brush-strokes. Though the bright colouring shows something of the influence of Fauvism it still retains much of his own innate austerity.

G De Smet

25
Married Couple on the Doorstep 1923

In this painting one can sense the whole way of life of an ordinary village person whose great strength lies in the sense of spiritual peace and calm that he seems to possess. Forms are greatly simplified with the refined colours placed against each other in firm, solid slabs. Vertical and horizontal lines create a restful and poetic atmosphere and the folded hands and closed eyes of the couple serve to emphasise this still further.

G De Smet

34
Nude on a Bed 1930

By the time "Le Centaure" went bankrupt in 1930, De Smet had already broken with the fashionable atmosphere of intellectual life in Brussels, so much in evidence in some of his earlier work and had returned to live among the country people whose company he so much preferred. He has painted this nude in warm copper tones, not so much as a beautiful woman but rather as a pure and delicate presence, full of the charm of awakening life.

G De Smet

38
Country Fair 1933

The annual village "kermesse" is part of Flemish folk-lore. De Smet often painted this subject employing a whole range of refined colours. His deep attatchment to country life made it possible for him to convey such complete conviction the real atmosphere of this special holiday occasion.

COURTAULD INSTITUTE

J Ensor

60
Scandalized Masks 1883

Ensor's first painting where the mask is in evidence though here it has been made ridiculous to serve as a disguise. The Carnival night has just ended and an angry woman finds her drunken husband at a pub-table. The dark palette used here is typical of Belgian impressionism.

J Enser

61
Self-portrait in a flowered hat 1883

By adding the flowered hat to a self-portrait which had been painted at an earlier date in a quite straight forward and realistic way, Enser has created one of his most ironic images. Parodying, as he was to on several other occasions, Rubens' self-portraits, he shows an amused irreverence, a painter aware of his artistic inheritance, more than a little malicious yet at the same time revealing a quality of almost obsessive introspection.

J Ensor

76
Girls Dressing 1886

A light study most probably dating from the transitional phase between Ensor's so-called "dark" period and the much brighter works of 1887. It is a time when Ensor was concentrating rather more on etching and drawing. There is a much greater intensity of light in this work and Ensor almost certainly had seen some of Turner's paintings that year.

J Ensor

105
Old Woman with Masks 1889

A commissioned portrait which was refused by the sitter. Ensor added the masks at a later date. In this work he has taken full advantage of the opportunity with which it provided him, to mock the conventional attitudes of contemporary society. The woman laughs along with the masks, at the same time expressing a defiant agony. As R. Huyghe says of such paintings "The two great destroyers: laughter and death."

J. Ensor

107
Intrigue 1890

Ensor painted this two years after *The Entry of Christ into Brussels*. The red, blue, yellow and green used in it form an extremely sharp and intense series of contrasts. The synthesis of colour and line, together with a very evident sarcasm contribute to create a masterpiece.

J Ensor

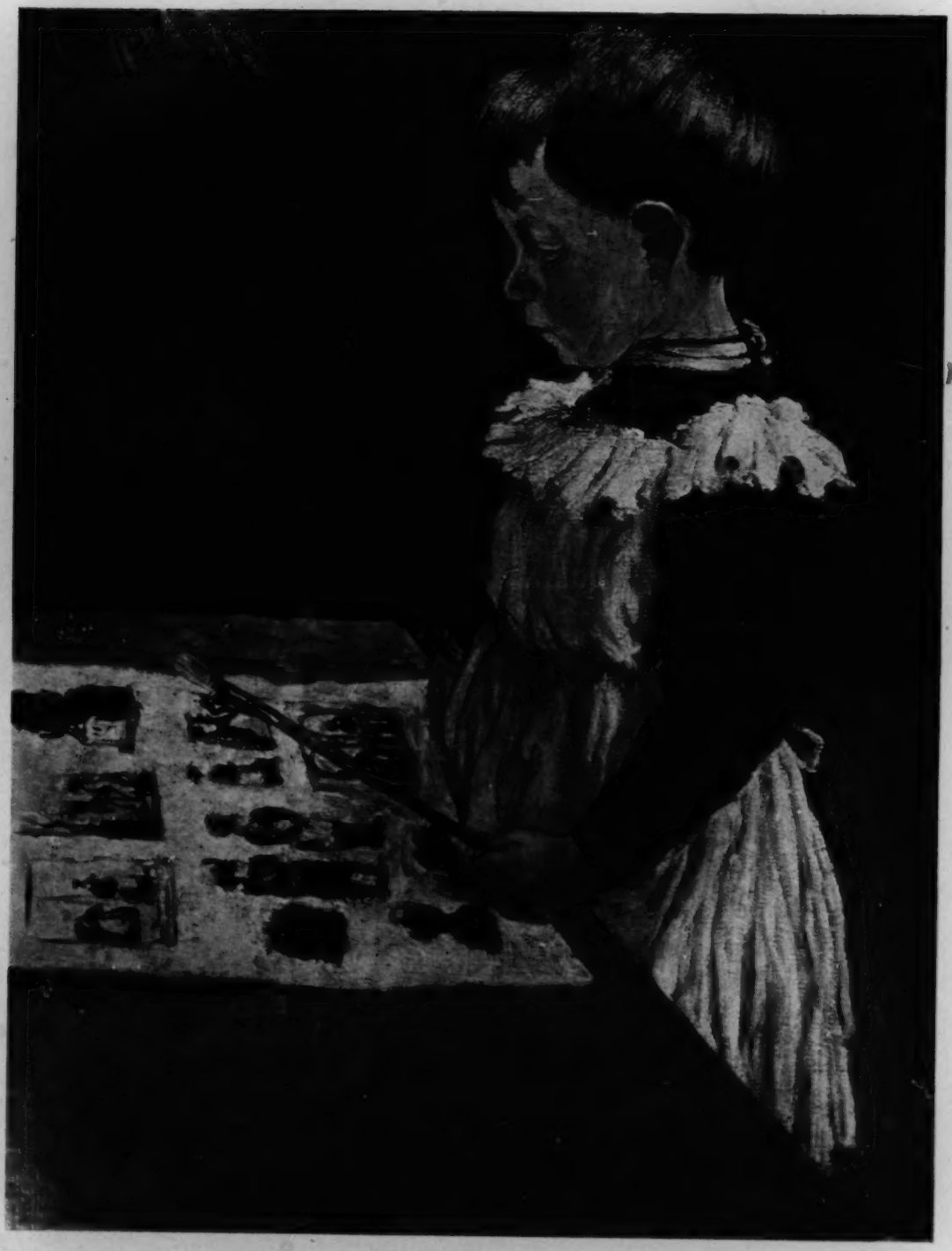
119
Strange Masks 1892

This group of masked people, all dressed up in party clothes, defiantly trying to make themselves look younger and more vivacious than they really are, is deliberately intended to appear absurd. The sharp reds clash under the senile mask; an unstrung violin lies on the floor and the candle is extinguished. It is pointless to try and keep up appearances. Their aggressive defiance is translated, compositionally, into a superb arabesque and the graphic element has reached a ferocity unequalled since he first took up etching.

H Evenepoel

153
Pictures - Louis Charles Crespin 1895

This comparatively early work was painted in 1895 while Evenepoel was completing his studies in Pairs. Outstanding as a painter of portraits and genre subjects, Evenepoel had a quite remarkable gift for portraying children, seeming to penetrate their world with the greatest sympathy and insight. Charles, the subject here, was to appear in a number of further studies e.g. '*Charles in a striped jersey*' of 1898.



H Evenepoel

157
Woman with White Hat 1897

Evenepoel's passionate love for Louise inspired him to undertake a series of superb portraits. The woman displays a silent melancholy to which the white-flowered hat brings a poignant note of gaiety. This work quietly demonstrates that the basis of all Evenepoel's portraits is a deep psychological understanding of his subject.

H Evenepoel

171
Sunday in the Bois de Boulogne 1899

A peaceful, Sunday afternoon scene in Paris with people escaping from the city to enjoy the pleasant atmosphere of the Bois de Boulogne. Here the choice of subject brings Evenepoel close to French Impressionism. Nevertheless he manages to retain those ever-present elements of the Flemish impressionist palette, brown and grey. He died in the same year as this work was painted, an artist whose promise was barely fulfilled.

C Permeke

175
Pretty Girl 1920

On his return from England, Permeke lived for a time in the fishing-quarter of Ostend and there observed at first hand the hard life of those rough-hewn workers with the greatest sympathy. With muted tones he painted this fisherwoman as monumentally as a fresco and yet with a tenderness sufficient for him to name the painting, *Pretty Girl*.

C[illegible]ermeke

1[illegible]
Nude 1921

During the twenties, Permeke's nudes were mostly life-sized, sensual and refined in their austere greatness. He did not aim to please; the female nude for him was another part of that vital dynamic feeling which dictated the whole of his production.

C Permeke

180
"Over Permeke" 1922

With its domestic interior this painting is an exception among Permeke's work. It has none of that high tension so evident in the monochrome works soon to follow. Permeke, whose head reminds one of an Easter Island statue, is calmly reading the newspaper account of an exhibition of his work in Brussels.

C Permeke

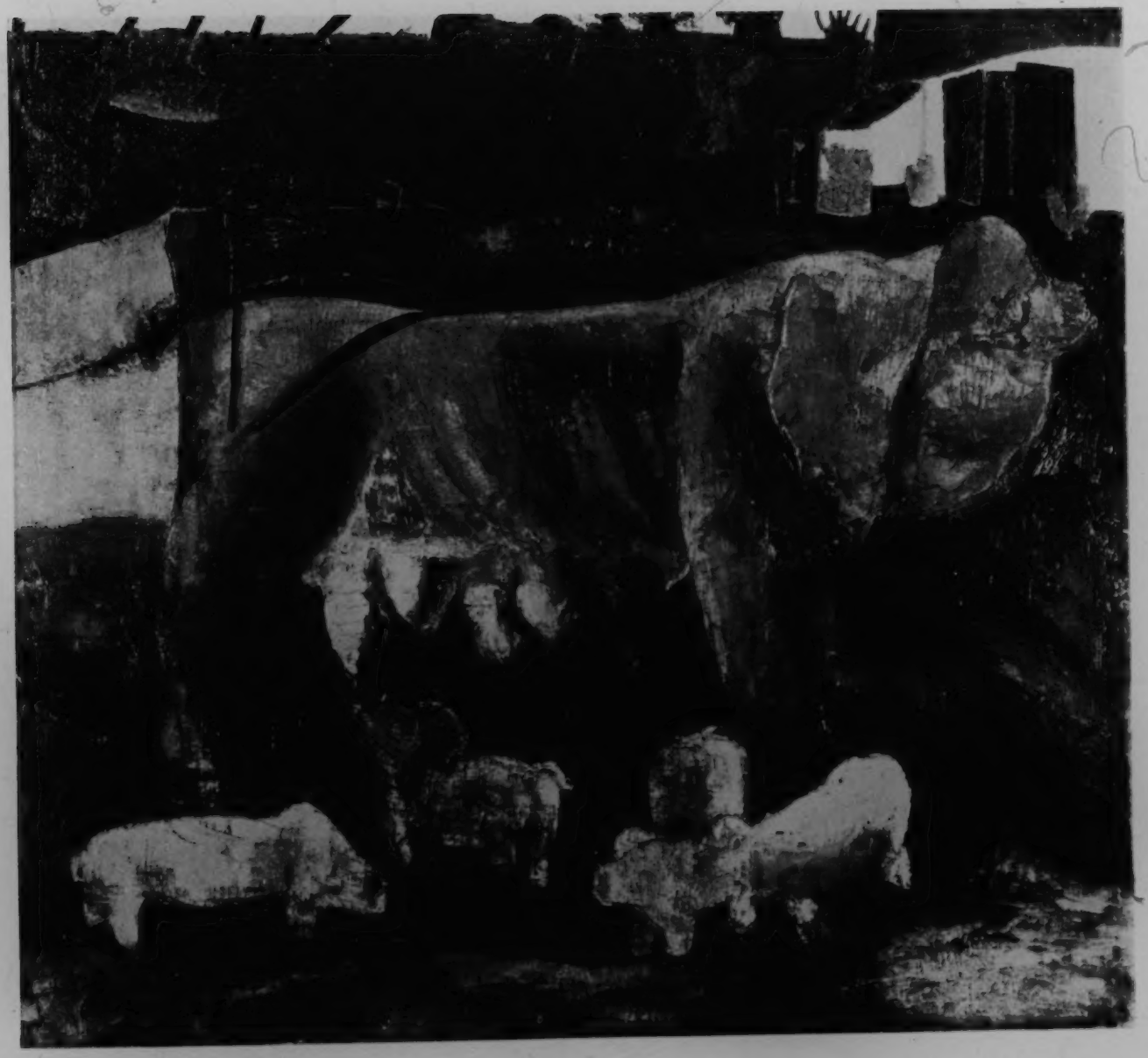
132
Black Bread 1923

The simple Flemish farmers had remained extremely poor for many generations. The bread here is treated in an almost sacramental fashion. The faces are barely discernible among the sombre and dramatic browns of the palette. These humble people with their rough and uncultured gestures express an impressive sense of dignity.

C Permeke

194
The big Sow 1929

Permeke always places a symbolic dimension on both man and beast. In "The Sow" he expresses the same elemental quality that can be found in his many female nudes, that of fertility.



C Permeke

201
Marie-Lou 1935–36

In 1936 Permeke, without any previous experience, started modelling and at once proved himself to be the most considerable sculptor of his generation. The nudes are over life-size, and their extremely simple structures give them a colossal strength.

C Permeke

207
Beach in Brittany 1951

Beach in Brittany is one of Permeke's later works, completed in 1951, the year before his death. It reveals an undiminished concern for the life of humble working people – the man working on the boats, the massive powerful figure of a fisherman walking past and the small domestic group of mother, child and dog in the middle distance. The heavy and dark colours of the earth have been refined into warm, yellow ochres and subtle greys. People and things are merely outlined. Brutal force has changed into quiet contemplation of a life that has lost nothing of its intensity.

L. Spilliaert

220
Gust of Wind 1904

A girl in a billowing gown standing on top of a sea-wall, this was a theme on which Spilliaert made a number of variations. Unlike Ensor he quite explicitly places the human figure to the fore, confronting the sea, and thereby implying man's domination of nature through his psychological power and complexity.

L Spilliaert

237
Girl bathing 1910

The composition of this watercolour is formed by a diagonal line which creates a sharp contrast between the hard, firm lines of the flight of steps and the rippling, disturbed surface of the water. It is a work which clearly contains expressionist tendencies.

L Spilliaert

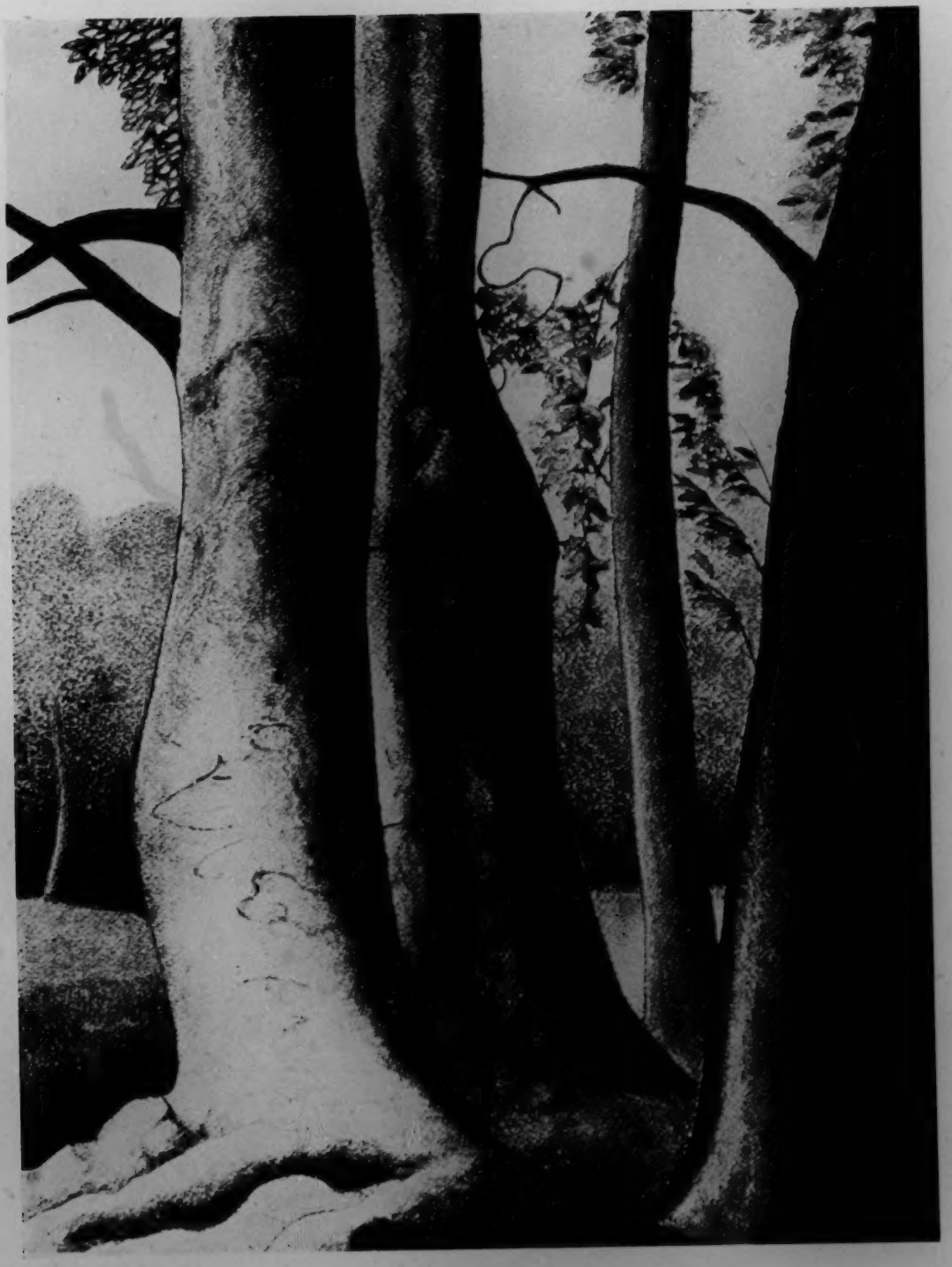
239
The Young Girls with white stockings 1912

Much better known, because it has been far more frequently exhibited than most of Spilliaert's work, *The Young girls with white stockings* is a striking example of Spilliaert's gift of synthesis. Undifferentiated and anonymous, with all the life and vigour of youth, the girls seem to epitomise Spring. Spilliaert has succeeded in capturing the essentials with the barest minimum of detail.

L. Spilliaert

247
Trees 1945

Towards the end of his life Spilliaert no longer included human figures in his work, as if he had found in nature a long awaited spiritual peace. The beautiful studies of trees, done in Indian ink and watercolour, have an almost surrealist character.



E Tytgat

258
Under the charm of the Flute 1925

Everything in this painting is beautifully woven together, the tree on the hill with the lambs reminding one of the earlier representations of the Fall. It also provides an erotic keynote to the theme which is presented, with considerable irony, using the naive though still surprisingly sophisticated language of popular imagery.

E Tytgat

260
Inspiration 1926

How could Tytgat have possibly represented "inspiration" other than as a young, naked and desirable beauty for whom he, as the eternal lover, waits in the solitude of his studio in front of his empty canvas, with the window wide open on the wonderland from which she descends on a cloud?

E Tytgat

277
The Last Journey of a Proud Noblewoman 1951

Throughout his career Tytgat produced canvases of unquestionable mastery. Yet in his watercolours he achieves a still higher degree of refinement and spirituality in which nothing seems to disturb that exquisite poetry which is the key to his art.

F **Van den Berghe**

285
The Good Inn 1923

In 1922 Van den Berghe settled down on the banks of the Lys and there proceeded to paint some of his greatest expressionist work. The uncontrolled structure of his "Dutch" period had by now become more controlled with large, carefully constructed compositions showing life-size figures. The picture displays a rustic peace and calm – the man with his pipe and a bicycle and the innkeeper's wife in the lumbering ferry-boat which safely conveys her customer to the "good inn" where he will be well looked after.

F Van den Berghe

289
The Singing Statue 1928

During 1928 Van den Berghe's expressionism underwent a striking change with a very noticeable deepening of mood, probably the consequence of some kind of profound spiritual stress. There is a thrilling quality in the sombre anguish of this primitive and grandiose figure which takes us into the imaginative world of surrealism.

F Van den Berghe

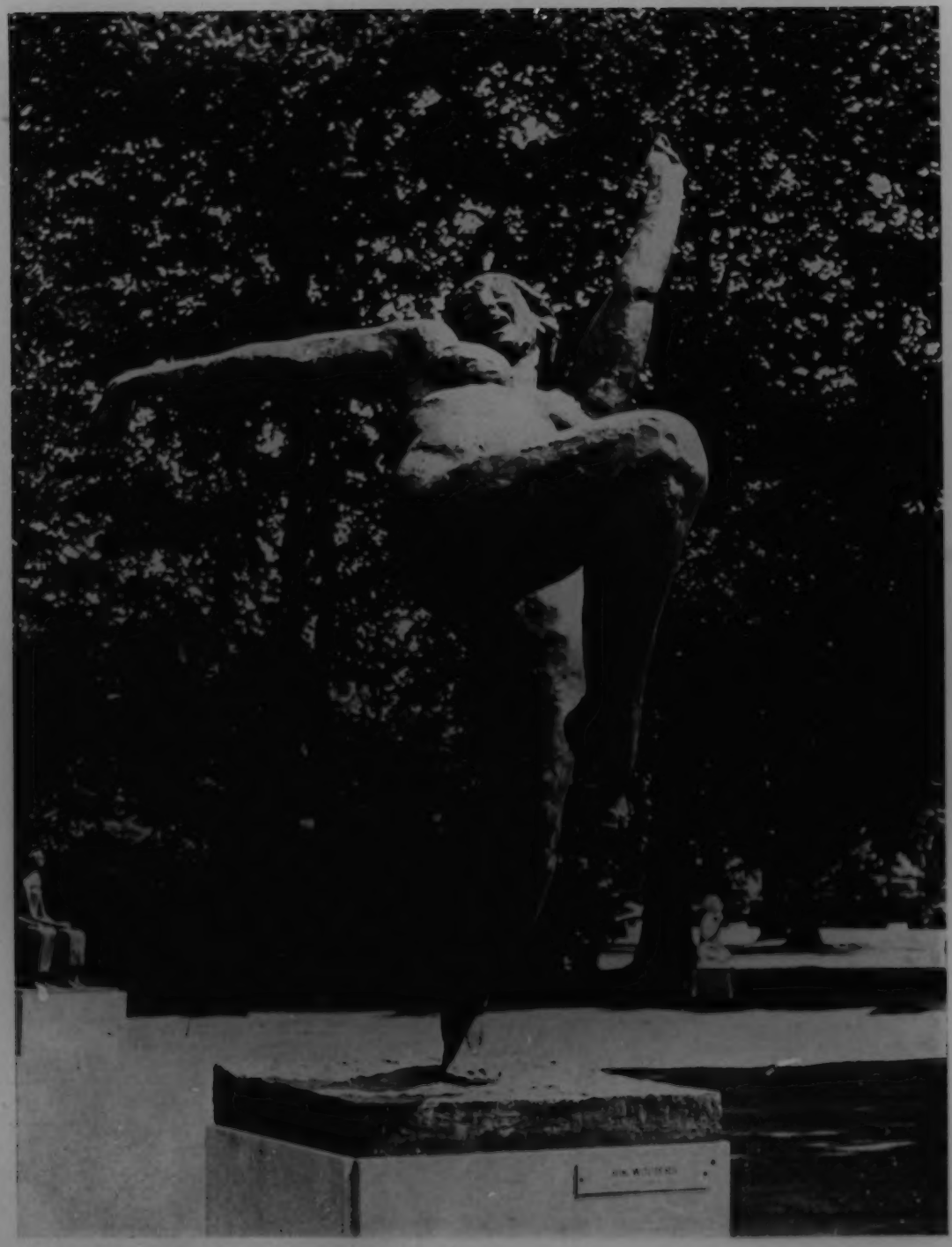
292
The Domain of Love 1929

In a menacing landscape a woman struggles to free herself from a figure that is half man and half tree-trunk. The blotchy colour recalls the artist's use of marbled papers before 1920.

R Wouters

309
Wild Dance 1912

Wouters had recently seen the "Scythian Dance" performed by Isadora Duncan. In *Wild Dance* he attempted to translate this "motif" into an explosion of energetic life. With its almost centrifugal force this sculpture is a representative example of Wouter's post-impressionist vision.



R. ..outers

Woman in blue with amber necklace 1912

This symphony to the joys of life, expressed in a profusion of brilliant colours, shows the artist's wife Nel. She was a constant source of inspiration to Wouters and the subject of many of his paintings. W. Vanbeselaere writes "When he met his wife Nel his passion for life blazed up suddenly like a fire, consuming everything and transforming all that he saw into an exuberant expression of his love".

R Wouters

315
Birthday Flowers 1912

1912 was a year which marked a considerable personal breakthrough for Rik Wouters. In Paris he had formed a great admiration for Renoir, Degas and more especially Cézanne. In 1913 he wrote to Simon Levy. "I am quite certain of my feeling that there is nobody who works more (than Cézanne) according to the sensations offered to him by life." The dominant red tonality and the sharp, vibrant contrast of the flowers express Wouter's almost intoxicated sense of joy and happiness with life.

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